

2 CBRNE



ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE

*Dedicated to Global
First Responders*

DIARY

April 2024



**Iran
drone war**



**Postpone
Opening Ceremony
in river Seine
before it is too late!**



PART A

**One-and-done
vaccine
protects against
multiple coronaviruses**

C²BRNE DIARY-2024[®]

April 2024

Website: www.cbrne-terrorism-newsletter.com

Editor-in-Chief

BrigGEN (ret.) Ioannis Galatas MD, MSc, MC (Army)

Ph.D. cand

Consultant in Allergy & Clinical Immunology

Medical/Hospital CBRNE Planner & Instructor

Senior Asymmetric Threats Analyst

Manager, CBRN Knowledge Center @ International CBRNE Institute (BE)

Athens, Greece

➔ Contact e-mail: igalatas@yahoo.com

Editorial Team

- **Bellanca Giada, MD, MSc (Italy)**
- **Bossis Mary, Ph.D. Intern/EU Studies (Greece)**
- **Hopmeier Michael, BSc/MSc MechEngin (USA)**
- **Kiourktsoglou George, BSc, Dipl, MSc, MBA, PhD (UK)**
- **Photiou Steve, MD, MSc EmDisaster (Italy)**
- **Tarlow Peter, Ph.D. Sociol (USA)**

International CBRNE Institute

Rue de la Vacherie, 78
B5060 SAMBREVILLE (Auvélais)
BELGIUM

Email: info@ici-belgium.be

Web: www.ici-belgium.be

ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE



DISCLAIMER: The C²BRNE DIARY[®] (former CBRNE-Terrorism Newsletter), is a **free** online monthly publication for fellow civilian/military CBRNE First Responders worldwide. The Diary is a collection of papers and articles related to the stated thematology. Relevant sources/authors are included and all info provided herein is from **open** Internet sources. Opinions and comments from the Editor, the Editorial Team, or the authors publishing in the Diary **do not** necessarily represent those of the International CBRNE Institute (BE).

●▶ Occasional advertisements are free of charge.

ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE



Topics that attracted attention!

EDITOR'S CORNER





Editorial

Brig General (ret.) Ioannis Galatas, MD, MSc, MC (Army)

Editor-in-Chief
ICI C²BRNE Diary

ICI
International
C²BRNE
INSTITUTE



Dear Colleagues,

The situation changed for the worse: two wars (one proxy; one terrorist/proxy) – one major terrorist bloodshed in Moscow – an (ongoing) pandemic – indifference to peace and the death of innocent civilians.

Moscow Massacre: The first results of the investigation show that the terrorist attack was carefully planned and prepared. The attack killed 139 people," Bastrykin said, adding that "137 died at the scene of the terrorist attack and two died in hospitals. 40 people died from gunshot wounds, two from a combination of gunshot and stab wounds. As a result of the fire, 45 people died from exposure to the fire. The first results of the investigation show that the terrorist attack was carefully planned and prepared. The attack killed 139 people," Bastrykin said, adding that "137 died at the scene of the terrorist attack and two died in hospitals. 40 people died from gunshot wounds, two from a combination of gunshot and stab wounds. As a result of the fire, 45 people died from exposure to the fire. While leaving the parking lot with their car, the terrorists hit pedestrians at high speed: a family with two small children. The children were seriously injured and taken to hospital.

Moscow's Aftermath: Germany will tighten border controls as part of heightened security measures due to the summer's European Football Championship. This year's Euro starts on June 14 and it is estimated that around 2.7 million spectators will watch it in the stadiums and more than 12 million others from giant screens that will be set up in central points of various cities. Not to mention the Paris Olympics and the stupid idea of an "open" Opening ceremony with 600,000 spectators! Meanwhile, the [New York Times](#) revealed that the American intelligence services did not pass on the information they had about the terrorist attack on the Crocus City Hall in Moscow to their Russian counterparts, because they were afraid that their sources would be revealed and they would find out in Moscow that they were extracting information! This mind absence cost 143 dead and 182 wounded – bravo!

Proxy War 1: The EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, admitted in his statement to the American CNN that the support offered by all Western countries to Ukraine is not given because "Westerners love the Ukrainians but because if Russia wins, USA will lose its position as a global player"! A truth synonymous with vagrancy!

In its daily "[Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment](#)," the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) revealed that financial, economic, and military indicators suggest Russia is preparing for a large-scale conventional conflict with NATO, "not imminently but likely on a shorter timeline than what some Western analysts have initially posited." OMG! They have recruited mediums as well! On the other hand, Britain could not fight Russia for more than two months, the Deputy Chief of Defense Staff Lt Gen Sir Rob Magowan has [admitted](#) – but this does not affect the British big mouth rhetoric! Same for the French Army exploring five [scenarios](#) to fight Russians in Ukraine! An exclusive [IPSOS poll for Euronews](#) - the first of its kind involving nearly 26,000 respondents from 18 EU countries - reveals that only 36% of Europeans want aid to Ukraine to be a priority of




the next European Parliament. It is of note that only 17% of Greeks consider the continuation of EU aid to Ukraine a priority, while 45% consider the issue to be of secondary importance. These rates are lower only in Hungary, well below the European average.

NATO Secretary General G. Stoltenberg made incredible statements about the Ukrainians essentially revealing what they are interested in and asking for the conflict to continue. In his attempt to defend his proposal to give another 100 billion dollars to Kyiv (no one knows where these sums are spent), he told the member countries: "Give the money because that is how we reduce Russian power without an American dying or NATO soldier". What an idiot! In the mean time, \$60 billion were allocated to Ukraine by the US – including ATAMCS [M48 or M57?].

Proxy War 2: A majority of Americans now disapprove of Israel's war against the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas in Gaza, with support dropping from 50 percent in November to 36 percent this month, according to a [new Gallup poll](#). To have an opinion requires knowing what is going on outside your State – this is not the case with Americans.

Security Games (aka Olympic Games): "The Polish Armed Forces (EOD/K9) will join the international coalition set up by France to support the preparation and security of the 2024 Summer Olympics," said Minister Władysław Kościński-Kamicz. The main objective will be to undertake operations for the detection of explosives and the fight against terrorism. Greece will also provide 11 police officers and one K9 unit. **Finally**, the French have alternative plans for the opening ceremony (Trocadéro or the Stade de France). The thing is who will control illegal immigrants during the Games (see recent Afghan chaos in Paris [21/4]).

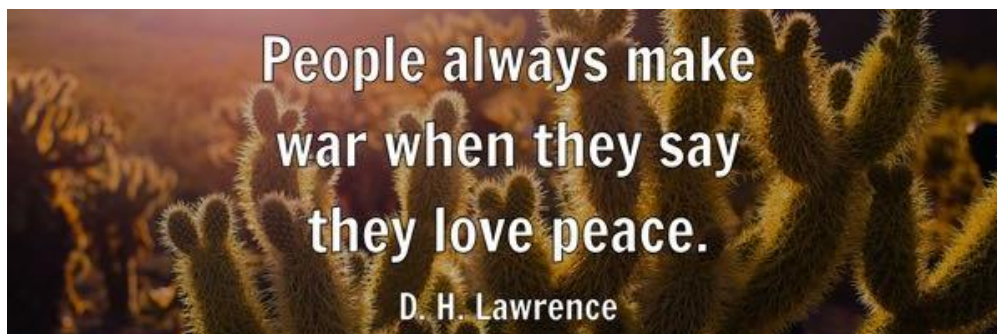
 **Iran – Israel Tension:** If Iran attacks Israel with a missile barrage, then the retaliation could involve nukes from submarines or an EMP bomb. Unless Iran prefers the usual terrorist way of targets around the globe. → It happened (13/4): Iran fired some 300 drones, and missiles at Israel in a first-ever direct attack; 99% downed. Israel's interception of dozens of Iranian missiles and drones cost about \$1.35 billion (Yedioth Ahronoth - Ynetnews) – in contrast to \$38-62 mil for Iran! The big question is "Does Iran have [nuclear](#) (or RDD) warheads"? Waiting for Round 2. Round 2 (19/4): Israeli airstrikes against targets in the Iranian province of Isfahan — the site of significant nuclear facilities, and Tabriz in the north-west. A strike with a message "Yes, we can get through. Don't do it again. If you do it again, then all heck will break out."

WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2024	
BATTLE TRAUMA MANAGEMENT	
14.30-15.00	LECTURE
Chairpersons: A. Kafantogias (GRC), I. Kapiris (GRC), G. Gkouvas (GRC)	
Military Hospital CBRN Preparedness and Response	
I. Galatas (GRC)	



Finally, it was an honor and pleasure to be invited to lecture on "Military Hospitals CBRN Preparedness and Response" at the 6th International Committee for Military Medicine [ICMM] Pan European [Conference](#) held in Zappeion, Athens, Greece (16-19 April 2024) under the auspices of the Hellenic National Defense General Staff.

The Editor-in-Chief



* David Herbert Lawrence (11 September 1885 – 2 March 1930) was an English novelist, short story writer, poet and essayist.



Reply to an Editorial comment

By the Editor-in-Chief

In the March 2024 Editorial, I wrote:

US-China Tension: Fierce attack by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin against the US: "You have caused all the wars on the planet and sowed pain and death". The absolute truth in one sentence!

A medical publisher from Massachusetts, USA emailed me this question: "Do you really believe this?"

I replied: "Yes Sir! I do!" – and this is why (according to ChatGPT):

Following the end of World War II, the United States has been involved in several wars, conflicts, and military interventions around the world. Here is a list of some significant ones:

1. **Korean War (1950-1953):** The United States, alongside other United Nations forces, intervened in the Korean Peninsula to support South Korea against invasion by North Korea, which was supported by China and the Soviet Union. Total Deaths: Approximately 2.5 million people, including military and civilian casualties from both sides, as well as Chinese and Soviet involvement.
2. **Vietnam War (1955-1975):** The United States became heavily involved in the Vietnam War to support South Vietnam against communist forces from North Vietnam, as part of its containment policy against the spread of communism. Total Deaths: Estimates vary widely, but it's generally believed that between 1.5 to 3.5 million Vietnamese soldiers and civilians were killed, along with over 58,000 American military personnel.
3. **Persian Gulf War (1990-1991):** The United States led a coalition of forces to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait after Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait. Total Deaths: Estimates suggest around 20,000 to 35,000 Iraqi military personnel and civilians were killed, along with fewer than 400 coalition military personnel.
4. **War in Afghanistan (2001-present):** Following the September 11 attacks, the United States, as part of NATO forces, invaded Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban regime and dismantle Al-Qaeda's infrastructure. Total Deaths: Estimates indicate over 157,000 people killed, including Afghan security forces, Taliban fighters, civilians, and coalition troops, including over 2,300 U.S. military personnel.
5. **Iraq War (2003-2011):** The United States, along with a coalition of allies, invaded Iraq, primarily to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein and eliminate perceived weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs. The war later evolved into a protracted conflict with insurgency and sectarian violence. Total Deaths: Estimates vary widely, but it's believed that between 151,000 to over 1 million Iraqis died as a result of the conflict. Over 4,400 U.S. military personnel were killed.
6. **War in Somalia (1992-1995):** The United States led a multinational coalition in a humanitarian intervention to provide relief to famine-stricken Somalia and to restore order amidst civil war and chaos. Total Deaths: Estimates suggest around 30,000 to 50,000 Somalis died during the conflict, including civilians and combatants. The number of U.S. military casualties was relatively low, with 43 deaths officially recorded.
7. **Intervention in Libya (2011):** The United States, along with NATO allies, intervened in Libya to support rebels during the Libyan Civil War, ultimately leading to the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi's regime. Total Deaths: Estimates suggest between 2,000 to 7,000 people were killed during the conflict, including combatants and civilians. The number of U.S. military casualties was minimal.
8. **Military interventions in the Balkans:** The United States participated in several military interventions in the Balkans during the 1990s, including the Bosnian War and the Kosovo War, aimed at ending ethnic conflicts and promoting stability in the region. Total Deaths: Estimates suggest around 130,000 to 140,000 people were killed during the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Kosovo. The number of U.S. military casualties was relatively low compared to other conflicts.

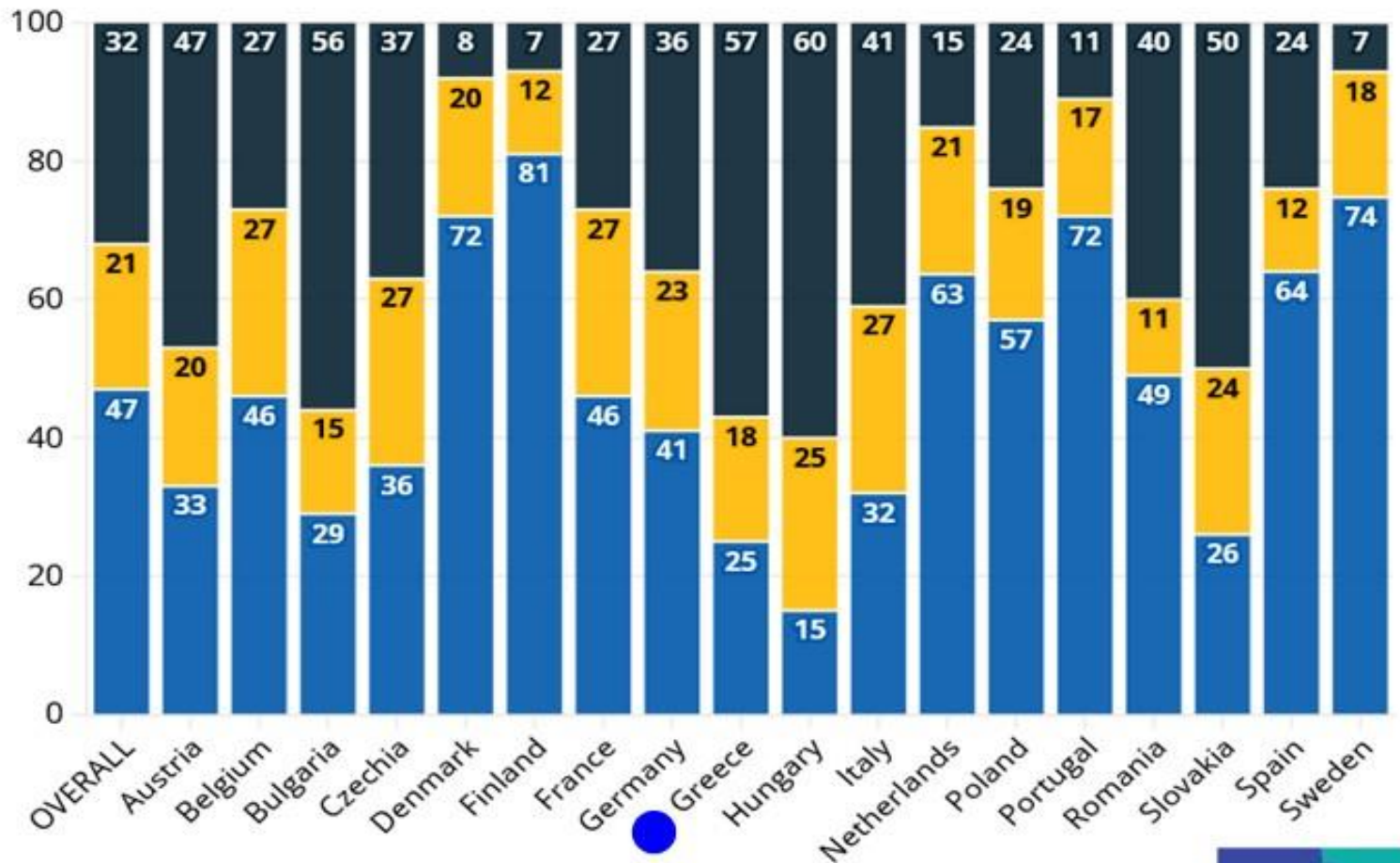
These are some of the major conflicts and interventions involving the United States following World War II. There have also been numerous smaller military engagements, peacekeeping operations, and covert actions undertaken by the United States during this period. Deaths numbers are approximate and can vary based on different sources and methodologies used for estimating casualties. Additionally, they often include both military personnel and civilian casualties.



What's your opinion of Volodymyr Zelenskyy?

By country

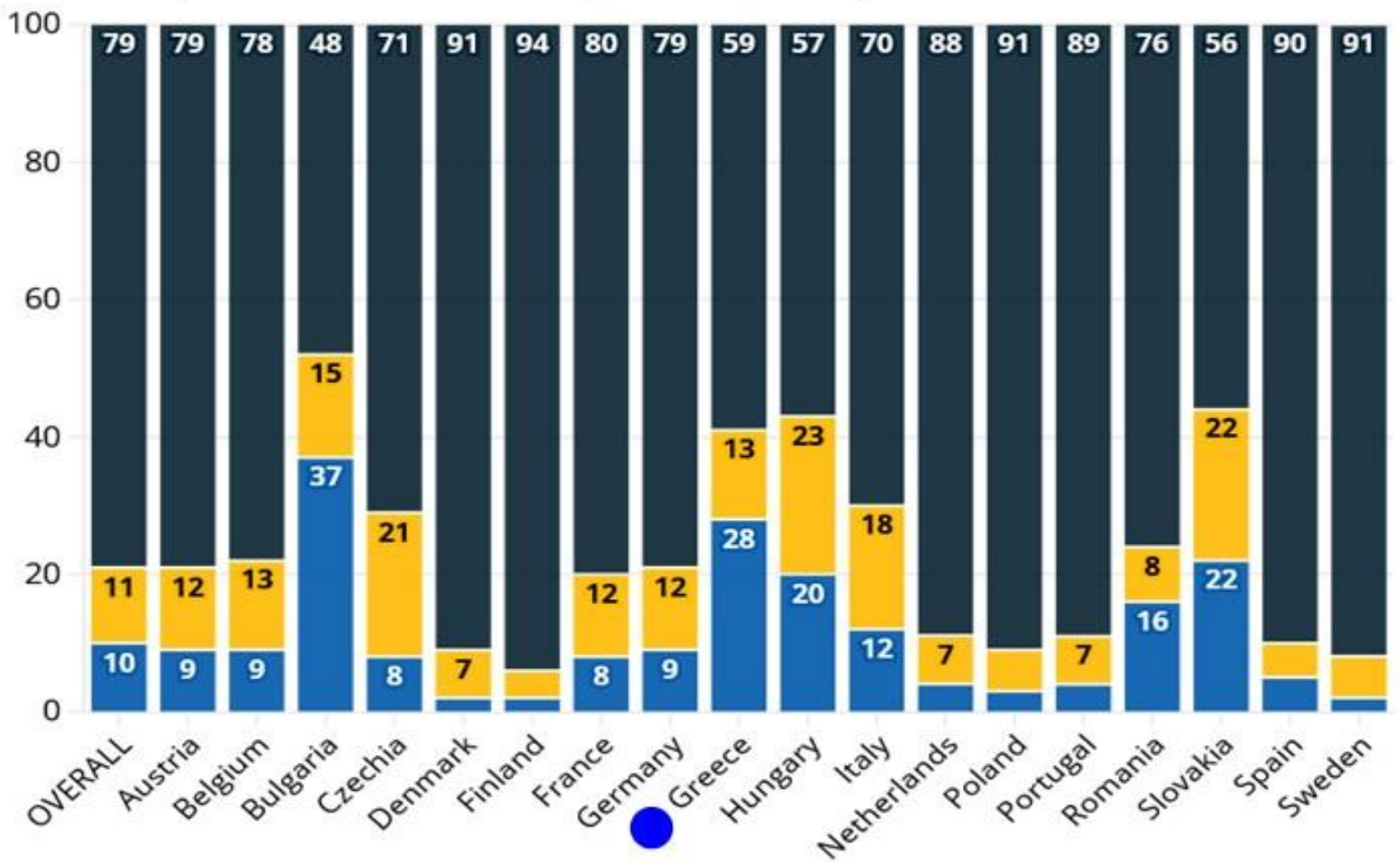
Positive opinion Don't know enough Negative opinion



What's your opinion of Vladimir Putin?

By country

Positive opinion Don't know enough Negative opinion



The Icarus Trap: Arrogance, Misperception, and the U.S. Invasion of Iraq

By Joseph Stieb

Source: <https://warontherocks.com/2024/03/the-icarus-trap-arrogance-misperception-and-the-u-s-invasion-of-iraq/>

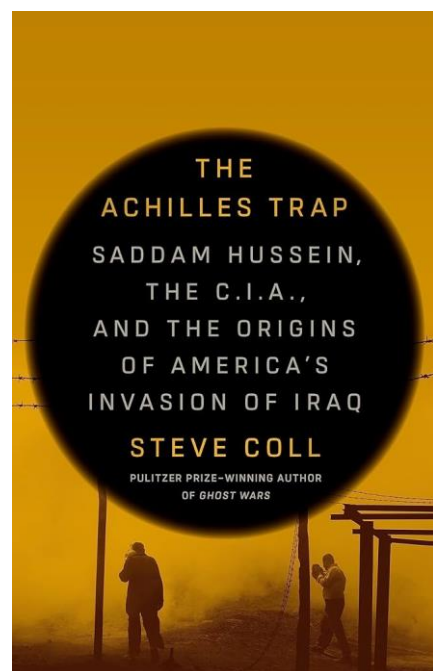


Mar 25 – Was the Iraq War a product of mutual misperception by U.S. and Iraqi leaders? Since the United States failed to find significant weapons of mass destruction following the 2003 invasion, [scholars have wondered](#) whether this disastrous war might have been avoidable if each side had more accurately perceived the other. There may have been a middle ground in which the Iraqis fully communicated their disarmament and the Americans accepted a defanged but intact Iraqi regime.

In his fascinating and vividly written book, **Steve Coll** offers the best version of this argument to date. Tracing U.S.-Iraqi relations from the 1980s to 2003, he shows how mutual misperceptions and miscommunications created a spiral of conflict and distrust that culminated in the ill-fated U.S. invasion. Each side made assumptions about the other that were not entirely unreasonable in context but that also closed off opportunities for de-escalation.

The result of this argument is the Iraq War as a tragedy. Like Juliet taking her own life not knowing that Romeo was merely sleeping, the George W. Bush administration stumbled into an unnecessary and destructive war. Had they just known that Iraq had no significant weapons of mass destruction programs, they would have avoided the war.

Explaining this “failure of comprehension” is important for grasping the war’s origins, but this approach has limits. Focusing on miscommunication risks construing the war too much as an avoidable misunderstanding rather than as a tale of delusion, hubris, and obsession on the part of U.S. policy-makers. This was not just a “tragic invasion to eliminate a



nonexistent [weapons of mass destruction] arsenal” but a product of the aspirations, vulnerabilities, and sheer might of a hegemonic power.

Mutual Misperceptions

This book separates itself from much existing work on the Iraq War by using a host of new sources. It draws on tape recordings, minutes of meetings, and intelligence files held at the Conflict Records Research Center in Washington, DC. As [Michael Brill](#) explains, previous scholars drew on these records captured after the U.S. invasion of Iraq before funding cuts led to the center’s closure in 2015. Coll, however, filed suit against the Defense Department in 2021 and gained access to a large portion of these records, enabling him to paint an intricate portrait of the Baathist government and its leader.

This book provides compelling insights on topics like the Iraqi nuclear program, Saddam Hussein’s inner circle, and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) efforts to topple him in the 1990s. This review, however, focuses on Coll’s story of how U.S. and Iraqi leaders continually misread each other and plunged into avoidable conflicts.

In the 1980s, the United States tilted toward Iraq in order to contain Iran and tried to woo the Baathist regime with economic aid while limiting criticism of Iraqi human rights abuses. Saddam, however, never lost his rigid view of United States, and the CIA in particular, as a hostile and omnipotent power out to destabilize his government. Coll emphasizes Saddam’s deeply antisemitic worldview and his belief that Zionists controlled U.S. media and policy, driving them to undermine his regime even when the United States was trying to reach out.

There was also sufficient evidence of U.S. deceit to fuel some of Saddam’s fears about Washington’s intentions. For example, the U.S. provision of arms and intelligence to Iran in the mid-1980s bolstered Saddam’s belief that the United States aimed to debilitate both sides in order to defang threats to Israel and U.S. power in the region. Coll quotes Saddam saying that Iran-Contra showed “the real American-Israeli-Iranian conspiracy ... a conspiracy against us.”

The United States also misread Saddam in the lead-up to the 1990–91 Gulf crisis and failed send a clear deterrent message against an invasion of Kuwait. Saddam in turn believed that with the end of the Cold War, the United States would “continue to depart from the restrictions that govern the rest of the world ... until new forces of balance are formed.” It would use this [hegemonic moment](#) to try to control Middle Eastern oil and bolster Israeli power. He believed that the United States “displayed signs of fatigue, frustration, and hesitation” that might enable him to seize Kuwait and get away with it. U.S. silence at his use of chemical weapons in the 1980s and other crimes further convinced him that the United States would not punish his invasion of Kuwait. As Saddam later told his interrogators in captivity, “If you didn’t want me to go in, why didn’t you tell me?”

Coll reinforces the [scholarly conclusion](#) that Saddam pursued nuclear weapons mainly to deter the United States and Israel and to assert his regional power and self-conception as leader of the Arab nations. When the United States made clear deterrent threats, he respected the red lines. For instance, Secretary of State James Baker warned Saddam that the United States would seek “the elimination of the current Iraqi regime” if it used chemical or biological weapons on coalition forces, and Saddam refrained from using them during Desert Storm.

After a successful military campaign to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the United States championed the U.N. efforts to destroy Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction programs, using sanctions to coerce Iraqi compliance. Simultaneously, the George H.W. Bush administration deviated from the Gulf War coalition by declaring that the United States would not lift sanctions on Iraq until Saddam was overthrown, contradicting the U.N. Security Council resolution that set up the inspections.

Saddam [identified this fissure](#) in the coalition early and worked over the course of the 1990s to pull nations like China, Russia, and France away from the U.S. hard line. Moreover, this U.S. position, which President Bill Clinton continued despite some reservations, convinced Saddam that there was little point in full compliance. Referring to the inspections, Saddam even told his advisors that “sanctions without all these sacrifices are better than sanctions with them.”

Coll’s chapters on the inspections are engrossing. He shows how Saddam’s son-in-law Hussein Kamel initially led the effort to hide Iraq’s weapons programs, leading to confrontations with the inspectors. In the summer of 1991, he pivoted and ordered the destruction of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and related facilities. However, he did so without preserving the documentation that could prove to the inspectors that Iraq had unilaterally destroyed all of its programs. This set the inspections regime on the impossible mission of verifying exactly what programs and materials the Iraqis had possessed and how quickly they could reconstitute those capabilities, even as the Iraqi security services continued to harass them. When the Iraqis did expose the full extent of past programs, including revelations about its biological weapons arsenal in 1995, it only deepened the inspectors’ and U.S. leaders’ belief that Iraq had more to hide, a dynamic that [Malfrid Braut-Hegghammer](#) calls “the Cheater’s Dilemma.”

Nonetheless, as [Gregory Koblenz](#) has also argued, Iraqi non-cooperation was in part rooted in Saddam’s reasonably founded belief that the United States was working to overthrow him and that the inspectors posed a security threat. The CIA provided aerial photos of suspected weapons sites to the inspectors as



early as 1991. With U.S. encouragement, the inspectors in the late 1990s intensified operations to unmask the Iraqi “concealment mechanism,” or the Special Security Organization’s system of obstruction. This involved closer cooperation with U.S. intelligence as well as attempts to enter sensitive Iraqi facilities, including areas that Saddam depended on for internal security.

When the Special Security Organization removed documents or tried to block the inspectors from these sites, U.S. policy-makers concluded that they were trying to hide information or materials instead of attempting to “secure the presidential protection system whose overriding purpose was to keep Saddam Hussein safe.” Repeated confrontations with the inspectors led to their ouster from Iraq at the end of 1998, which left the international community blind to internal Iraqi behavior. From then on, most of the international community operated from the assumption that, as Clinton told British Prime Minister Tony Blair, “I’ve reached the conclusion after eliminating all possible alternatives that Saddam still has the making of a chemical and biological program he doesn’t want to give up.”

Coll spends a lot of time on CIA attempts to woo Iraqi leaders in the 1980s and its later efforts to spark a coup in the 1990s. These chapters are riveting, but it is not clear how important the CIA’s actions were, especially in the 1990s. The George H.W. Bush administration sought to foment a coup but also feared the destabilizing consequences of Saddam’s overthrow. The Clinton administration was even less enthusiastic about pursuing a coup and even rescinded support at the last second for a hare-brained CIA scheme in 1995.

It seems unlikely that these plots could have worked given the brutal competence of Saddam’s security forces and U.S. reticence to take risks to remove a threat that was mostly contained. As one CIA officer told Coll, Clinton “set up a system that protected him politically from claims that he wasn’t serious about deposing Saddam, but he set up a fail-safe system to preventing anything from actually happened.”

The Road to the 2003 Invasion

Coll spends less time on the U.S. decision-making that led to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which is [well-covered ground](#). Nonetheless, his book deftly connects the themes of mutual miscommunication and misperception to the 18 months between 9/11 and the war’s onset. The George W. Bush administration shifted quickly from Afghanistan to Iraq as the centerpiece of the U.S. response to 9/11. In August 2002, Bush called for the return of inspections and threatened to use force to disarm Iraq if it failed to comply. Unlike [some scholars](#), Coll correctly notes that this was “a cynical exercise, a test designed for Saddam to fail” in which Bush hoped to gain international support for a decision for regime change he had effectively already made.

When the inspectors returned to Iraq in December 2002, the misperceptions of the 1990s inhibited the possibility of de-escalation. Iraqi officials told the inspectors that they had no active weapons of mass destruction programs, which was true, and Saddam ordered his subordinates to destroy or surrender all remaining documents or equipment.

However, the Special Security Organization continued to prioritize regime security, which “all but guaranteed that whenever U.N. inspectors headed for sites regarded as sensitive, Saddam’s bodyguards would scramble into defensive action, zipping around in vehicles and chattering over radios as they tried to identify and hide protected places, people, or documents.” The Iraqis also continued to block unfettered access to scientists who might manage to explain the extent of its weapons of mass destruction research.

So while the inspectors found little evidence of ongoing weapons production, Iraqi behavior sent the opposite message: that they had something to hide and intended to reconstitute these programs eventually. As Coll argues, Saddam’s conspiratorial worldview explains a lot of this behavior: “He assumed that an all-powerful CIA already knew that he had no nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. A CIA capable of getting such a big question wrong on the facts was not consistent with Saddam’s bedrock assumptions.” Coll vividly portrays an aloof and incompetent Saddam who played his strategic cards poorly as the United States shifted its attention to Iraq. He gloated over America’s trauma after 9/11, asserting on Iraqi state television one day after the attacks that “the United States reaps the thorns that its leaders have planted in the world.” He utterly failed to realize how 9/11 had altered U.S. security perceptions and unleashed its willingness to use force to eliminate potential threats. As U.S. rhetoric intensified and its military forces assembled in the region, he stuck to his longstanding belief that the United States was weak and that nations like Russia and China would bail him out.

In fact, Saddam seemed more interested in finishing his winding novels than saving his own skin. He even managed to print 40,000 copies of his fourth novel, *Get Out, Damned One!*, before going underground. One gets an image of an Iraqi King Lear, dawdling and prevaricating as the forces of his own destruction swirled around him.

The Limits of Tragedy and Misperception

However, Coll and [other authors’](#) portrayal of the Iraq War as a “failure of comprehension,” and the resulting [narrative of a tragic war](#) cannot fully capture this conflict’s origins. [Gideon Rose](#) endorsed this



view in his assessment of Coll's book: "The Iraq War shows what happens when neither side knows either." Mutual misperception is a piece of the puzzle, but just a piece.

One issue with misperception arguments is that they cannot explain why the United States approached the containment of Iraq in the 1990s in such a stringent manner. Coll helps us see how the inspectors were unable to fully verify Iraq's unilateral destruction of its own weapons of mass destruction. But, as [Samuel Helfont](#) and [I have argued](#), this does not explain why the United States demanded such ironclad proof of Saddam's total disarmament, nor why it pursued such a hardline position on Iraq compared to most other members of the Gulf War coalition. At some point in the 1990s, the United States probably could have declared a 95 percent victory, ended the inspections, eased the sanctions, and accepted a Saddam-led Iraq as a geopolitical reality.

Instead, throughout the decade, U.S. leaders supported intrusive inspections and refused to consider sanctions relief until absolute compliance was verified. As Coll documents, it pursued hare-brained schemes of toppling Saddam. The United States and Great Britain also aggressively wielded their veto power on the U.N. committee responsible for [enforcing sanctions](#), barring critical goods such as insecticide, refrigeration equipment, and chlorine for fear of "dual-use" in weapons production.

Misperception issues cannot fully explain this behavior, which undermined containment by alienating partner nations, convincing Saddam that full cooperation was pointless, and immiserating the Iraqi people. U.S. allies also misinterpreted much of Iraq's behavior, but they did not insist on such a stringent approach to the problem. It seems contradictory that the most powerful nation on earth, the one best equipped to protect itself from weapons of mass destruction or ballistic missiles, insisted on the highest standard of security vis-à-vis Iraq.

U.S. hegemony in the 1990s and early 2000s offers a more complete explanation of Iraq policy. On both sides of the aisle, [U.S. grand strategy](#) sought to consolidate and expand primacy, markets, and democracy, using the unipolar moment to lock in long-term advantages. U.S. leaders saw "rogue states" like Iraq as the last redoubts of resistance to U.S. power and the waves of democratization and globalization sweeping the world. As [some scholars](#) have argued, states' definitions of their own security expand as they gain power; they can do more and try to eradicate threats that they might once have tried to manage. Not only did U.S. leaders resent that Iraq was defying the *Pax Americana*, they also had the power in this era to finish the job and a sense of ideological purpose in doing so.

We also have to look at U.S. domestic politics to understand the severity of U.S. policy on Iraq in the 1990s. The messy ending of the Gulf War, especially Saddam's survival and crushing of internal revolts, led many Democrats and Republicans to criticize Bush for not removing Saddam. Bush's own [declarations](#) that the United States would not lift sanctions as long as Saddam remained in power set a hardline precedent that constrained his successor. A movement of neoconservatives, liberal hawks, Republicans, and Iraqi exiles [coalesced](#) to defend the hardline approach and advocate for an overt regime change policy. Referring to Saddam, Clinton told Tony Blair in 1998 that "if I weren't constrained by the press, I would pick up the phone and call the son of a bitch. But that is such a heavy-laden decision in America."

The predominant ideas, politics, and mood of the United States in the 1990s drove U.S. leaders to seek absolute solutions to problems like Iraq. While they did misperceive Iraq in many ways, Americans also defined their own security requirements and role in the world in ways that generated repeated collisions.

Another problem with a focus on misperception lies in the fact that in the early 2000s, the George W. Bush administration, as well as most of Congress and the U.S. public, was not seeking to gather information and update beliefs on Iraq. Rather, for a variety of reasons, the Bush team as well as most of Congress and the public had already decided upon the [necessity of regime change](#) before the inspectors re-entered Iraq in late 2002. As Coll duly notes, the Bush administration exaggerated and distorted intelligence analysis on the war, showing their determination not to seek the truth but to bolster an existing conclusion. That only a [handful](#) of members of Congress bothered to read the [2002 National Intelligence Estimate](#) on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs demonstrates that this attitude was not confined to the executive branch.

Many U.S. leaders and thinkers [wanted this war](#) and had been working since well before 9/11 to bring it about, for a variety of reasons. As [Ahsan Butt](#) argues, the United States believed that it needed to demonstrate its resolve to state sponsors of terrorism after 9/11 and that Iraq offered an ideal target for flexing its muscles in order to assert "generalized deterrence" against state sponsors of terrorism. Other key policy-makers, [including Bush](#), believed that the United States might address the root causes of terrorism by implanting democracy in places like Iraq.

It is not clear what the Iraqis could have done to avoid a U.S. invasion in early 2003. They could not reveal a weapons programs they did not have, and any such revelations would have fed the Bush administration's belief that the regime could not be trusted. But obstructing the inspectors led to the same conclusion.

Theoretically, if U.S. leaders had perfect knowledge of Iraq's lack of weapons, they may have avoided war. But over the preceding decade-plus, they had constructed an understanding of the Baathist regime that made it impossible for the Iraqis to credibly communicate their disarmament.



Bush most likely agreed to the inspections not because he believed they might work but to rally domestic and international support for war. Vice President Richard Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz opposed any new inspections, fearing a return to the “[cheat-and-retreat](#)” dynamics of the 1990s and believing unshakably that Saddam was engaged in weapons of mass destruction production. Rumsfeld wrote to Bush in October 2002, for instance, arguing that new inspections would inevitably result in “a protracted period of inconclusive inspections” that would give Saddam his “best hope of inflicting a strategic defeat on the U.S.”

Moreover, as Coll explains, the Bush administration ignored that the inspectors in early 2003 were not finding significant weapons of mass destruction programs, even at locations where the CIA had encouraged them to search. Top inspectors were directly contradicting U.S. claims, including infamous assertions about aluminum tubes. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice dismissed these findings (or lack thereof), arguing that “we need to be careful about drawing these conclusions, particularly in a totalitarian state like Iraq.” [Inside accounts](#) of the administration’s decision-making show that Bush made the final decision for war in January 2002, just a month into the inspections, and that they ignored the inspectors’ calls for more time.

The Iraq War, in short, was probably more about Americans fooling themselves than Saddam fooling Americans. We have to understand the miscommunications that Coll ably explores as well as how Americans interpreted the Iraqi threat, the international security environment, and their own identities and roles in the world. The idea of the Iraq War as a tragedy stemming from misperception has some validity, but it risks letting leaders off the hook for rigid thinking, arrogance, and unrealistic goals.

Coll would probably agree with this assessment, as this is hardly an exculpatory book. He has spent a remarkable career documenting the hubris and overreach of much of U.S. foreign policy. He concludes that this was “an unnecessary war that he [Bush] and his war cabinet marketed through exaggerations of available evidence and unabashed fearmongering.” Rather, the purpose of this critique is to fit Coll’s story about mutual misperceptions into a [broader understanding](#) of the war’s causes, which reflected both the U.S. desire for security after 9/11 and its hegemonic power and aspirations.

Joseph Stieb is an assistant professor of national security affairs at the U.S. Naval War College. He is the author of *The Regime Change Consensus: Iraq in American Politics, 1990–2003*. He has published articles in the *Texas National Security Review*, *Diplomatic History*, *Modern American History*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *International History Review*, *War on the Rocks*, *Washington Post*, *Foreign Policy*, and elsewhere.

Personal ‘invisibility shield’ goes on sale, starting under \$70

Source: <https://newatlas.com/good-thinking/invisibility-shield-2/>



Mar 27 – If you’ve ever wished that you could turn invisible, here’s your chance. A consumer “invisibility shield” has just hit Kickstarter, and it could be yours for as little as £54 (about US\$68).

Manufactured by the London-based Invisibility Shield Co, the Invisibility Shield 2.0 is being offered in Mini, Full and Megashield sizes. As its name implies, it’s the new-and-improved successor to the company’s original Invisibility Shield.

So, how does it work?

Well, the Shield takes the form of a curved sheet of clear high-grade polycarbonate, which is held upright by a clear polycarbonate frame on the back. An array of tall, skinny lenses is embedded side-by-side in that sheet, each lens running all the way from the top to the bottom of

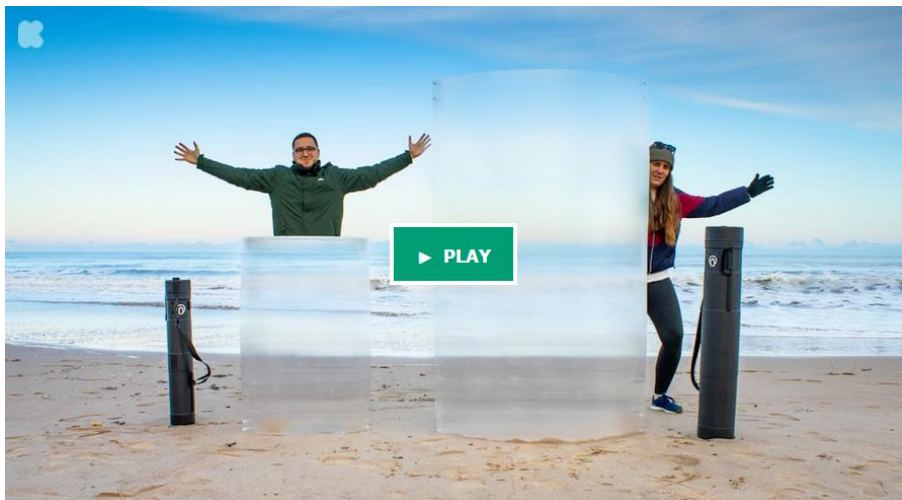
the Shield. As the user stands or crouches behind the device, the lenses diffuse the ambient light that’s reflected by their body across the entire front surface of the Shield. That said, the lenses also diffuse the light reflected by the user’s *background* across the whole front. Because the user is much narrower than their background, the light from their body is essentially drowned out by the light from the background. As a result, someone viewing the Shield from the front sees just the diffused background light, which blends right in with their view of the background itself.

The Shield works best if the user is wearing light-colored clothing, and if the background is fairly uniform in appearance – horizontal lines in the background really help sell the illusion. It doesn’t matter how far away the viewer is, as the effect remains the same.





The whole thing sounds very clever and whatnot, but ... what could you actually use the Shield for?



We're told that applications of the original Invisibility Shield have included hiding contestants on a Korean dating show, staying unseen when playing paintball, performing stage magic, hiding small items on an office desk for entertainment purposes, and observing wildlife. Potential backers should take note, however, that users can't clearly see their surroundings *through* the Shield – they have to peek around it.

The Full-size Shield stands 3 ft, 3 in tall by 2 ft, 3 in wide (99 by 69 cm), whereas the Megashield measures 6 ft by 4 ft (183 by 122 cm). The Mini – which hides things like "small items on an office desk" – comes in at 1 ft by 7.9 in (30.5 by 20 cm).

Assuming the [Invisibility Shield 2.0](#) reaches production, **a pledge of £299 (about US\$378) will get you the Full, £699 (\$883) will get you the Megashield, and £54 (\$68) will get you the Mini.** The three models can be seen in use, in the video below.

And should you be wondering, the Invisibility Shield 2.0 is said to be larger, lighter, stronger, stabler, brighter, easier to carry, and viewable from a wider angle than the original model.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Imagine the impact of the Invisibility Shield in the recent Moscow massacre camouflaging armed security guards! Read [also](#).



Still time to change your mind!



Poll: Next-to-No European Voters Think Politicians Doing a Good Job on Illegal Migration

Source: <https://europeanconservative.com/articles/news/poll-next-to-no-european-voters-think-politicians-doing-a-good-job-on-illegal-migration/>

Mar 27 – New polling by Ipsos for Euronews suggests that just 16% of European voters believe that EU leaders are doing a good job of handling what the paper euphemistically describes as “irregular”—that is, illegal—migration.

Presumably, many leading Brussels officials would view a heavy portion of the almost 26,000 respondents as being on the ‘far right,’ given that 59% said the “fight” against illegal migration should be a “priority.” Though they might not say this now, given their own efforts to [look tough on migration in order to attract right-wing voters](#) ahead of the European elections. Euronews itself does not, however, mind [blaming](#) “far-right parties” for “fuel[ing]” concerns surrounding migration issues.

If anything, the 59% figure might seem low. But a fuller picture of the electorate’s views on migration can be gained by adding to the total those who say illegal migration is not a priority but is “important” nonetheless.

In Denmark, for example, the poll suggests that [59%](#) of voters view illegal migration as “a priority” and 33% as “important but not a priority.” That’s 92% in total, leaving just 8% of voters who see the issue as “secondary.” (The same lowly figure was produced in Czechia and Finland, while in Austria, Belgium, Greece and Sweden, an equally unimpressive 9% said tackling illegal migration is “secondary.”)

The [report](#) does not consider European views on what Euronews might have called ‘regular’—that is, legal—migration. But many voters view this as being more important, not least because it is a much bigger issue in terms of numbers.

It appears, however, that this is not how UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak sees it. According to former home secretary Suella Braverman, Sunak has “[not](#) necessarily assumed that

[legal migration is] an important issue for the British people.” She added that when she was part of his government, the prime minister would talk about illegal crossings “every week, twice a week,” but could not be pinned down for a conversation on uncontrolled mass *legal* migration. And this was *after* the Brexit vote, which few pundits dispute centred around voters’ frustration with effectively wide-open borders.

It is worth noting that while Braverman’s criticisms of the Tory leader—who [sacked](#) her and who she has made numerous [clear attempts to replace](#)—might usually be best taken with a pinch of salt, it is already very believable that Sunak views legal immigration as politically unimportant since. After all, he is a thoroughly liberal Westminster type who also [didn’t believe in the Rwanda plan](#) to stop illegal migration.

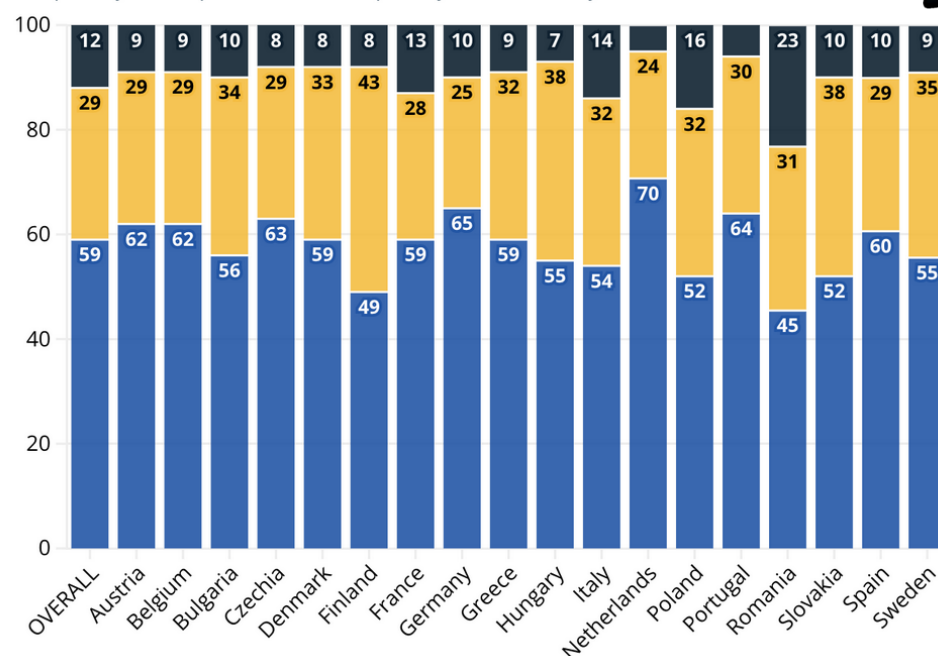
Robert Bates, research director at the Centre for Migration Control, said that regardless of Sunak’s views, he “is going to be remembered as the prime minister who finally gave up any pretence of border control.” Bates told *The European Conservative*:

The former Home Secretary spoke for millions of voters when she repeatedly attempted to raise the problems of mass migration around the cabinet table. Unfortunately no one else in that room would have had the inclination or the political will to tackle the problem head on.

How important is the fight against irregular migration?

By country

■ A priority ■ Important but not a priority ■ Secondary



It's all very well and good pledging to "Stop the Boats," but with no hint of the Channel crossings stopping, and the British public cottoning onto the fact that the real border disaster is our levels of legal migration, Sunak's party are set to face a kicking come the general election. Come polling day, I'm sure they'll all be wishing that they listened to Mrs. Braverman when she tried to raise the alarm.

As for the rest of Europe, the success of attempts by politicians on the Left to appear right on migration will be tested this June when voters go to the polls.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Who cares what EU citizens think or believe?

John Krull: **Fear** as a weapon of mass destruction

Source: <https://www.therepublic.com/2024/03/31/john-krull-fear-as-a-weapon-of-mass-destruction/>



Mar 31 — The warning came not long before it was time to board the train.

The French government had issued its highest-level threat alert. Everyone should be watchful.

The mass shooting in a Moscow concert hall that killed at least 137 people, for which the Islamic State claimed credit — such a twisted “achievement” over which to take a bow — prompted the heightened security.

The French had reason to feel wary. The massacre in Russia carried with it echoes of a similar horror in Paris in 2015, when a series of coordinated attacks left 130 people dead and another 400 wounded.

With the tourist season about to begin in earnest and the Paris Olympics approaching, France offers many potential targets for terrorists.

On the nearly three-hour ride from Avignon to the Gare de Lyon — Paris’ train station for travelers coming from and headed to the south — I watched the passengers for signs they were concerned. And saw none.

Across the aisle, a little boy midway between the baby and toddler stages amused everyone within earshot with his burlles and exclamations. Taking the train wasn’t a trip for him. It was an adventure and he wanted everyone around to know it.

After he fell asleep, the travelers settled into their routines. Most scrolled on their phones. Others read or did work on their laptops. Still others dozed.

When we arrived in Paris, the interlude ended.

Security personnel in their distinctive black uniforms were positioned every 15 or 20 steps. They scanned the crowd for any hint of trouble or danger.

At the turnstiles where passengers enter and leave the boarding platform, guards pulled disembarking travelers aside to open and inspect their bags. Some passengers even got pat-down body searches.

That wasn’t the case when I left from this train station less than a week ago to amble around Provence. Then, anyone with the proper ticket could stroll onto his or her train undisturbed.

But that was before the Islamic State made clear it was issuing statements again — and punctuating them with tragedies on a large scale.

More caution seems merited.

The question is whether it will make a difference.



Russia is one of the most closely guarded police states on the planet. The Russian people must endure invasions of privacy and deprivations of personal autonomy most residents of the self-governing world would struggle to tolerate for an hour, much less their entire lives.

And yet the murderers associated with the Islamic State circumvented all the Russian security protocols and brought death by the dozens to a music hall in Moscow.

Such is the nature of warfare in this age.

It is not only undeclared but asymmetric and seemingly random in nature. The ones who practice it seek not to destroy or capture traditional military targets. Instead, they want to use fear as a weapon of mass destruction by creating the impression that anyone anywhere at any time can be subject to a deadly attack.

Hence, the name terrorists.

They seek to shake our sense that the world operates in a rational, predictable way.

And they draw strength from counterproductive responses to their surprise murder sprees and other evil acts. When they see how desperate their adversaries are to draw them into more traditional kinds of war, they know they are gaining ground.

Consider the situation in Gaza.

What Hamas did — the murders, the rapes, the kidnappings — was evil in all ways, but the Netanyahu government's response on behalf of Israel likely only will encourage similar attacks in the future.

Benjamin Netanyahu's overwhelming use of force has left civilians — not the hostage-takers, rapists or murderers of Hamas — feeling the bulk of Israeli rage. Many of those in Gaza who have lost loved ones will want to strike back.

That is the ultimate goal of terrorists. They seek to make us think and act like them.

And at times, they seem to be winning.

Once I cleared the turnstiles, I did a quick scan of the throng to see if anything seemed amiss. My eye caught nothing worthy of concern.

I did, however, see the little boy who amused everyone in the train car.

His mother carried him in her arms.

He was still sleepy from his nap, so he rested his head on her shoulder.

John Krull is director of Franklin College's Pulliam School of Journalism and publisher of TheStatehouseFile.com, a news website powered by Franklin College journalism students, where this commentary originally appeared.

Venus of Milos became an athlete and goes to the Olympics in Paris

Source: <https://athens-times.com/venus-of-milos-became-an-athlete-and-goes-to-the-olympics-in-paris/>

Apr 02 – Venus of Milos will have her honor in the Olympic games of Paris, as the marble statue located at the Louvre Museum, will move to the steps of the French National Assembly, in the 7th department of Paris, on the left bank of Seine, opposite Concord Square. Six sculptures, each representing an Olympic/ Paralympic sport, in the outdoor exhibition “Beauty and Gesture”, will be there from Tuesday (2/04/24) and during the Olympic and Paralympic Games of Paris 2024, to 22 September.

Colorful works by artist Lauren Perbosh will represent Olympism, to celebrate sport and art, at the seat of the French National Assembly, which will thus participate in the Cultural Olympiad. “French visualist Lauren Perbose conceived the artistic idea, choosing for each sculpture the following sports: basketball, boxing, acrobatics, paratroxism, surfing and tennis. Inspired by Venus of Milos, these female figures made of acrylic resin each hold an object representing her sport, an allegory that contradicts the collective imagination that connects sport with men and reflects the evolution of the Games,” says the website “sortiraparis”.

Each of these works is associated with the color of the rainbow, symbolizing equal rights and fighting discrimination.





A Vision to Connect Africa and Asia

Source: <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/the-bin-laden-bridge-a-vision-to-connect-africa-and-asia-a-573588.html>

The bin Laden family certainly doesn't lack for courage. Mohammed bin Laden, the father, left behind his past as the illiterate son of a farmer to become immensely wealthy in the construction business. One of his sons, the terrorist Osama, decided to take on the superpower America.

And now, Osama's half-brother Sheikh Tarik has decided that he too would like to go down in history. Tarik, though, has chosen a more peaceful route to prominence, though dramatic in its own right.

To that end, he invited business acquaintances, politicians and investors to the Republic of Djibouti earlier this month. It is a country that is struggling through a severe drought, a place where one in eight people suffer from hunger. Sheikh Tarik, though, welcomes these challenges. Indeed, his plan is of a magnitude that could end up bringing unprecedented prosperity to the arid country. He envisions a massive bridge connecting Djibouti to Yemen -- Africa to Asia -- complete with a shiny new city on each side.

The 61-year-old, though, left the presentation of his vision to others. During the mid-August show, he sat in a hotel conference room in the front row right next to Djibouti's prime minister, Mohamed Dileita. Tarik wore a white dishdasha and he remained mostly silent. Occasionally he would lean over to the prime minister and whisper in his ear.

Sheikh Tarik Bin Laden is the CEO of Middle East Development, LLC, one of the best known building contractors in region. He arrived to the meeting by private jet, befitting a man who does billions of dollars worth of transactions each year on the Arabian Peninsula. [His father restored holy sites in Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem.](#) -- and now Tarik wants to add whole new dimension to his family's work.

Tarik's bridge would cross the Bab el Mandeb, the narrow straits where the Indian Ocean feeds into the Red Sea. Bearing a six-lane highway, a railway line and an oil pipeline, the structure would stretch fully 29 kilometers (18 miles) between continents -- an unprecedented piece of engineering. Huge pillars would have to be anchored to the sea floor some 300 meters (984 feet) below the surface. They would be spaced three kilometers apart.



At the hotel presentation, Sheikh Tarik's arguments in favor of the project were almost as grandiose as the bridge itself. His business manager spoke on topics such as "Issues of the Century," "New Markets" and "Hub for African Newcomers." Grand visions indeed, but the plans for the bridge are already well underway. In both Yemen and Djibouti about a thousand square kilometers of land have been staked out. Two free-trade zones are slated to be built there -- and the plan foresees them growing into cities soon thereafter. Within five years, there could be deepwater ports, airports and power stations bringing plenty of jobs along with them.



Research facilities, universities and 100,000 apartments are to follow within 10 years. And finally, 15 years on, the bridge will connect two ultramodern cities -- ecologically sound, low in emissions and above all, innovative.

In the future, it won't be governments who run cities, but rather corporations," is the philosophy behind Sheikh Tarik's plan.

In the preliminary phase alone there will be 60,000 jobs. Up to 850,000 jobs will be created by project's end in 2025.

"All eyes will be on us," the business manager promises. "Those of the Chinese, the Americans and in the Middle East."

For the engineers, the challenge presented by the bridge is immense. The towers will jut 400 meters into the sky -- some 170 meters higher than those of the Golden Gate Bridge. Tarik has also gotten the Danish engineering firm involved which helped build the Öresund Bridge between Sweden and Denmark.

The price tag, of course, is just as big as the engineering challenge. The bridge alone will cost \$25 billion. The two cities are estimated to cost at least \$175 billion on top of that. Sheikh Tarik himself plans to invest \$10 billion of its own money.

THE BRIDGE OF HORNS

The 20-mile bridge would span the Red Sea



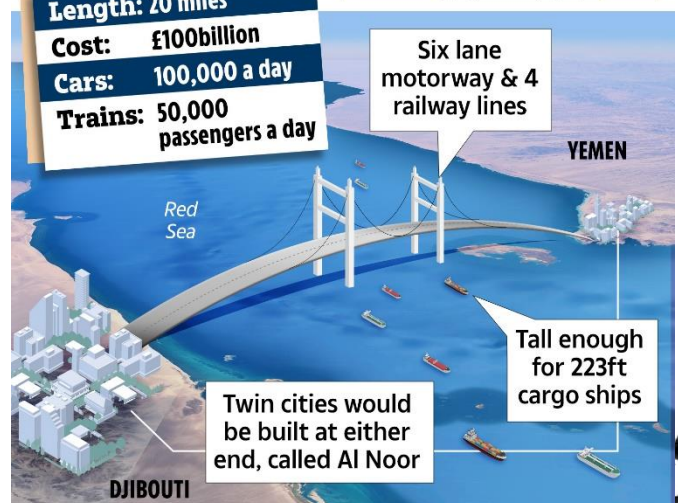
Length: 20 miles

Cost: £100billion

Cars: 100,000 a day

Trains: 50,000 passengers a day

Six lane motorway & 4 railway lines



Twin cities would be built at either end, called Al Noor

Tall enough for 223ft cargo ships





But one question hasn't yet been answered: Why? Is the project a masterly piece of far-sighted investment? Does Tarik want to make a generous gesture to Yemen, the country where his father was born before he emigrated to Saudi Arabia? Or is it an attempt at redeeming his family's reputation following the ill deeds of his half-brother?

Sheikh Tarik isn't saying. Nor is he or his business manager saying much about the project's potential snags. And the list is long. Djibouti's neighbor to the south-east, Somalia, is a disaster. Yemen itself is unstable as well and pirates and kidnapers roam the Horn of Africa. And then there is the lack of infrastructure on both sides of the strait -- a bridge only makes sense if thousands of kilometers of roads and rail are also built. Doubts, in short, are plentiful, but Tarik's spokesman insisted that the project would be underway by next year at the latest -- a start that will be quickly followed by a ferry service and a cement factory. But if all goes well, by 2025, the area will look radically different, and on the now sparsely populated Yemeni side, some 4.5 million people will live.

Sheikh Tarik remained silent throughout the entire presentation, smiling quietly. "He is a shy man," his business manager explained.

Shy, but courageous.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: African illegal immigrants and ISIS love the project!

A Tiny French Submarine 'Sank' a U.S. Navy Aircraft Carrier In a Simulation



The new NATO HQ in Brussels



Any resemblance to symbols of the past is purely coincidental



This is how the Greek Top Gun pilots fly





Greece – Illegal immigration 2024



Total arrivals in 2024

9,502

Last updated 17 Mar 2024

Land arrivals in 2024

854

Previous years	Sea arrivals	Land arrivals
2023	41,561	7,160
2022	12,758	6,022
2021	4,331	4,826
2020	9,714	5,982
2019	59,726	14,887

EDITOR'C COMMENT: This is an invention. And invention means war. Zero tolerance. Sink the illegal boats to defend against population change!

Go Navy!

Commander of the USS John McCain firing his rifle with the optic on backwards. The scope is also covered.



Lighting of the Olympic Flame

April 16, 2024

What is the point?



Iran drone war

Ukraine proxy war

Moscow massacre

Gaza terrorist war

Iran fires some 300 drones, missiles at Israel in first-ever direct attack; 99% downed

By Emanuel Fabian and Tol Staff

Source: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-launches-wave-of-drones-at-israel-in-first-ever-direct-attack-idf-braces-to-intercept/>

Apr 14 – Iran on Saturday night (13/4) launched a large wave of around 300 attack drones and missiles from its territory toward the Jewish state, in the first-ever direct attack on Israel by the Islamic Republic, triggering air raid sirens throughout the country early Sunday as the military worked to intercept the Iranian projectiles.

IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari first confirmed at 11 p.m. that the attack, anticipated for several days, had begun. He later said Iran also fired missiles at Israel, while “numerous” fighter jets were in the sky countering Tehran’s attacks.

Sirens began sounding in southern Israeli communities around 1:42 a.m., and soon after extended to large swaths of the country. Loud booms sounded across the north and the south as well as in Jerusalem and many towns across the West Bank.

The Magen David Adom ambulance service said its medics were treating a young girl in southern Israel who was wounded by shrapnel following the interception of an ballistic missile over the area.

The 7-year-old girl, from a Bedouin town near Arad, was taken to Soroka Hospital in Beersheba, where she was listed in serious condition. There were no other reports of injuries as a result of the Iranian attack.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards confirmed launching dozens of drones and missiles against specific targets in Israel, Iranian state media quoted a statement by the elite force as saying. The state-run IRNA news agency quoted an anonymous official saying that ballistic missiles were launched as part of the attack.

Hagari said that in total, Iran launched more than 300 projectiles at Israel, comprising 170 drones, 30 cruise missiles, and 120 ballistic missiles, and that 99% of them had been intercepted by air defenses.

“This is a very significant strategic achievement,” he said in a morning press statement.

“The Iranian threat met the aerial and technological superiority of the IDF, combined with a strong fighting coalition, which together intercepted the vast majority of the threats,” Hagari said.

All 170 drones and 30 cruise missiles were downed outside of the country’s borders by the Israeli Air Force and its allies, he said. Not one drone or cruise missile managed to enter Israeli airspace.

The IDF said that the long-range Arrow air defense system managed to knock down the “vast majority” of the 120 ballistic missiles, although some penetrated Israel’s defenses and struck the Nevatim Airbase in southern Israel.

At Nevatim, “slight damage” was caused to infrastructure, but the airbase was running as usual, Hagari said.

“As you can see now, the base is functioning and continues to perform its tasks. In the picture, you can see the runway at Nevatim,” he said, showing live footage from the airbase during his press statement Sunday morning.

“Iran thought it would be able to paralyze the base and thus damage our air capabilities, but it failed. Air Force planes continue to take off and land from the base, and leave for offense and defense missions, including the Adir (F-35) planes that are now returning from a base defense mission and soon you will see them landing,” he said.

Sirens had sounded across Israel as a result of the Arrow interceptor missiles being launched and fears of falling shrapnel, according to the IDF. The IDF’s Home Front Command later announced Israelis nationwide no longer need to stay near protected rooms, but said restrictions on gatherings and the cancellation of all educational activities and school trips remained in force as announced earlier. Three US officials said the American military shot down Iranian drones headed toward Israel, without disclosing how many were shot down or the precise locations. Security sources told Reuters that US forces operating from undisclosed bases in the region shot down a number of Iranian drones in Sweida and Deraa provinces in southern Syria near the Jordanian border.

Jordanian jets downed dozens of Iranian drones flying across northern and central Jordan heading to Israel, two regional security sources said in a dramatic show of support from Amman, which has heavily criticized Israel’s prosecution of its war against Hamas in Gaza.



Iranian



The sources said the drones were brought down in the air on the Jordanian side of the Jordan Valley and were heading in the direction of Jerusalem. Others were intercepted close to the Iraqi-Syrian border. They gave no further details.

Britain said Royal Air Force jets in the Middle East “will intercept any airborne attacks within range of our existing missions, as required.” “In response to increased Iranian threats and the growing risk of escalation in the Middle East, the UK Government has been working with partners across the region to encourage de-escalation and prevent further attacks,” the statement added.

The incoming attack led Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon to shut down their airspace for several hours. Israel also announced that its airspace would shutter as of Sunday at 12:30 a.m. until an unspecified time, leading to various flight cancellations. Flights at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport resumed at 7:30 a.m.

Egyptian military and security sources said Egypt's air defenses were on alert. They added that Egypt's military General Command formed a team to monitor the situation and make any necessary decisions regarding the country's airspace.

Syria also put on high alert its Russian-made Pantsir ground-to-air defense systems around the capital Damascus and major bases in the event of an Israeli strike, Syrian army sources told Reuters, explaining they expected Israel to retaliate against army bases and installations where pro-Iranian militia were based.

Iranian Defense Minister Mohammad Reza Ashtiani meanwhile threatened a firm response to any country that “opens its airspace or territory for attacks on Iran by Israel,” Iran's semi-official Mehr news agency reported.

Shortly after midnight, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and top defense leaders convened at military headquarters in Tel Aviv for a security assessment.

A “senior Israeli official” was later quoted by Channel 12 news pledging an “unprecedented response” to Iran's attack and urging Israelis not to go to bed due to what was coming Tehran's way.

The network also reported that the security cabinet authorized the war cabinet to make decisions regarding Israel's response to the Iran attack. The decision meant that the war cabinet would not have to seek security cabinet approval for any moves it might make, thereby streamlining the process when quick decisions are required.

In an earlier press statement, Hagari said the Air Force was tracking the drones, while noting that they would take several hours to reach the country. He said there would be GPS disruptions as the military works to intercept the drones.

“The defense and offense systems of the Israeli Air Force are on alert, and dozens of planes are in the skies — prepared and ready,” said Hagari, adding: “We have an excellent aerial defense array, but the defense is not hermetic.”

Sirens will only sound if the drones enter Israeli airspace, at the relevant locations, Hagari said. He added that the IDF will seek to intercept the targets as early as possible.

He added that the military would update the public if there were any additional attacks that require a separate warning.

Channel 12 news said the US was the first to identify the launch and immediately notified Israel, leading to a flurry of activity in recent hours in Israel and its surroundings that led to widespread public assessment that an attack was imminent.

State-linked media in Iran reported that a second wave of drones had been launched at Israel.

Two security sources in Iraq said dozens of drones had been spotted flying from Iran toward Israel over Iraqi airspace in what Iranian Press TV called “extensive drone strikes” by the Revolutionary Guards.

Channel 12 aired video from Iraq that purported to show a wave of drones passing overhead in the night sky. Several such videos were shared on social media.

Earlier in the evening, presaging the attack, the White House announced that US President Joe Biden would cut short a weekend trip to Delaware to hold consultations with his national security team on the potential Iranian strike on Israel.

“I just met with my national security team for an update on Iran's attacks against Israel. Our commitment to Israel's security against threats from Iran and its proxies is ironclad,” Biden wrote on X, formerly Twitter, after returning to the White House.

Biden's defense secretary, Lloyd Austin, called his Israeli counterpart Yoav Gallant for the second time in three days to discuss US support for Israel's defense, the Pentagon said.

“Secretary Austin made clear that Israel could count on full US support to defend Israel against any attacks by Iran and its regional proxies,” read the statement.

The two later spoke again following the Iranian attack, with Gallant's office saying he informed Austin “about Israel's defense actions.” The minister also thanked Austin for standing by Israel's side, and “emphasized that the defense establishment maintains maximum readiness against further attack attempts.”

National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan also spoke with his counterpart Tzachi Hanegbi to reinforce Washington's “ironclad commitment” to Israel's security.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak denounced Iran's “reckless” attack against Israel, which he said showed that it was “intent on sowing chaos in its own backyard.” “These strikes risk inflaming tensions and



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – April 2024

destabilizing the region. Iran has once again demonstrated that it is intent on sowing chaos in its own backyard,” Sunak said in a statement.



“The UK will continue to stand up for Israel’s security and that of all our regional partners, including Jordan and Iraq.”

France’s Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne condemned Iran’s attack as a “new level” in the threat to security.

“France condemns with the greatest firmness the attack launched by Iran against Israel,” he said on the platform X.

“In deciding to take this unprecedented action, Iran has reached a new level of destabilization and is risking a military escalation,” he added, reiterating France’s commitment to Israel’s security.

Before the incoming attack was confirmed, the IDF’s Home Command issued new guidelines shuttering all schools and educational activity the next day — action that would not affect most schoolchildren, who started their vacation ahead of the Passover holiday at the weekend. In addition to the closure of educational facilities, the military announced it would be forbidden for more than 1,000 people to assemble outdoors.



The IDF also canceled its planned enlistment day Sunday amid the Iranian attack on Israel. New conscripts will receive a new date for their draft at a later time.

Residents of the northern Golan Heights, the Nevatim area of southern Israel, Dimona, and Eilat, were instructed to remain close to bomb shelters until further notice.

The Iranian Attack



30 cruise missiles were fired.
None penetrated Israel



A few missiles caused slight damage to infrastructure



120 ballistic missiles were fired.
10 penetrated Israeli territory



85 tons of explosives were directed toward Israeli territory



99% intercepted



170 drones were fired.
None penetrated Israel



70 drones and **3** ballistic missiles were downed by the United States



32 Israelis treated for injuries and anxiety



3 Jordanians killed

0 Israeli killed

iNSS
Data Analytics



698 sirens in Israel



4.5 billion shekels
Cost of Israeli defense for the night

"We have been at war on several fronts for over six months," said Maj. Gen. Rafi Milo, the chief of the IDF Home Front Command, said in a video statement stressing that civilians should continue to follow its guidelines.

"Throughout the war we have faced and have confronted a large number of challenges in a very wide variety of threats, we learned and improved. We are prepared and strong in both defense and offense," he said

"In light of the situational assessment, we have decided to change the defensive guidelines. Starting tomorrow, throughout the country, there will be no educational activity. Also, gatherings of over 1,000 people are prohibited," Milo continued.

"You are required to continue to vigilantly adhere to the guidelines, they may change based on the situational assessment. So far, your conduct and adherence to the guidelines has been exceptional, keep it up, it saves lives," he said.

"The alert system is prepared and ready, together with the heads of the authorities and the emergency response organizations, we will overcome this challenge," Milo added.

As Israel braced for the Iranian drones and missiles, warning sirens sounded in the northern community of Snir, as the Hezbollah terror group claimed to have fired dozens of rockets from Lebanon at an Israeli army base in the Golan Heights.





The Iran-backed Hezbollah has been carrying out daily attacks on Israel amid the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

Security firm Ambrey said Yemen's Houthi rebels had launched multiple drones at Israel in coordination with Iran, adding that the projectiles were likely timed to reach Israel simultaneously.



"Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVS) were reportedly launched by the Huthis toward Israel. The UAVs were launched in coordination with Iran," the company said. "Israeli ports are assessed to be potential targets," it added, and warned of "collateral damage" to shipping. According to Hagari, drones launched from Yemen and Iraq amid the Iranian attack also failed to reach Israel.



Tensions between Israel and Iran had reached a new high in recent days as the Islamic Republic vowed to avenge seven Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps members, including two generals, who were killed in an alleged Israeli airstrike on a building near Tehran's consulate in Damascus on April 1.

"In response to the numerous crimes committed by the Zionist regime, including the attack on the consular section... the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps fired dozens of missiles and drones at specific targets inside the occupied territories

(Israel)," state television quoted an IRGC statement as saying as the strikes on Israel were announced. Operation Honest Promise was "being carried out with the approval of the Supreme National Security Council under the supervision of the General Staff of the Armed Forces," the IRGC statement said. Within minutes of the launch, the account on X of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei reposted his pledge that the "evil (Israeli) regime will be punished." Defense Minister Gallant said in a video



statement that Israel had “added new capabilities, on land, in the air, at sea, in intelligence, within the State of Israel, and together with our partners, led by the US,” in preparation for attacks from the “terror state” Iran.

Citing unnamed sources, CNN reported Saturday that the US expected Iran to target multiple sites inside Israel and in the region in the coming days, with one of the sources cited as saying that the US had observed Iran preparing as many as 100 cruise missiles to strike Israel. A senior US administration official told CNN that Iran’s proxies could be involved in the attack as well.

Also citing unnamed sources, Channel 12 reported that by the Israeli security establishment’s estimation, Iran would strike military rather than civilian targets. On Saturday morning, the IRGC seized a Portuguese-flagged cargo ship, at least partially Israel-owned, near the Strait of Hormuz. Following the incident, Foreign Minister Israel Katz called “on the European Union and the free world” to designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization and slap sanctions on Iran.

“The ayatollah regime of Khamenei is a criminal regime that supports Hamas’s crimes and is now conducting a pirate operation in violation of international law,” said Katz.

Several international entities have made adjustments to regular business amid the expected Iranian attacks.

Australia’s Qantas and Germany’s Lufthansa airlines on Saturday announced they would reroute flights in the Middle East, with the German airline saying it would avoid Iranian airspace altogether until Tuesday.

Canada on Saturday warned its citizens to avoid all travel to Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank, as Ottawa upgraded its risk assessment in the region. The Netherlands announced it would keep its embassy in Tehran closed on Sunday, and would decide then whether or not to reopen on Monday.

Olympus Has Fallen

By Sam Faddis

Source: <https://andmagazine.substack.com/p/olympus-has-fallen>

Apr 14 – Yesterday the Iranians fired somewhere between 200 and 300 cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, and drones at Israel. Never before have the Iranians staged a direct attack on Israel from their soil. Fortunately, the overwhelming majority of those weapons were intercepted by Israeli, British, American, and Jordanian forces before they reached Israel. Some missiles did make it through, however, and damage is still being assessed.

In response to this unprecedented attack, President Biden returned to Washington from Delaware and reportedly met with his top advisors. He then went to bed without addressing the American people. This morning the White House [announced](#) that it would not participate in any Israeli retaliatory attack. [Reports](#) also indicate that during a call with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu Biden opposed any action by Israel against Iran.

Per Biden, nothing of value was hit in Israel.

Take a moment and absorb the implications of what has just happened. The whole world was aware that Iran was preparing to attack Israel. Biden publicly advised the Iranians not to do so. They ignored him and launched an attack that was completely unprecedented in scale from their own territory. In response to that attack, Biden has advised the Israelis not to retaliate and has made clear that the United States will not support its closest ally in the Middle East in defending itself.

Since the birth of the state of Israel in one fashion or another we have guaranteed the security of that nation and made clear that we will always stand side by side with it. That is no longer true. Israel and Iran are now on the verge of entering into sustained, open conflict. The entire Middle East is in danger of going up in flames.

Our “President” says Israel is on its own if it chooses to fight back.

Since he sat down in the Oval Office Biden has done everything in his power to embolden Iran and to encourage its aggression. He has allowed the Iranians to sell oil in violation of sanctions. [They have made at least \\$35 billion in the last 12 months alone as a result.](#)

Biden [released \\$6 billion in funds](#) frozen in U.S. banks to Tehran. As even Tony Blinken has admitted ***Iran has used all of that money to fund terrorism and extremism across the Middle East.*** We have in other words paid for the war machine Iran is now using against Israel, and we have done so knowing that we were doing so.

“Iran has, unfortunately, always used and focused its funds on supporting terrorism, on supporting groups like Hamas,” Blinken [said recently.](#)

Biden appointed a special envoy to Iran, Robert Malley, who was a known [Hamas synthesizer](#). Before he was ultimately removed from his post for “mishandling” classified information Malley spearheaded a U.S. Government effort to enrich Iran and embolden it.



“Malley and others created an incredibly permissive environment for Hamas, for Iran, to do all these things,” added Gabriel Noronha, a former special adviser on Iran at the State Department. Noronha, who served under former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, said Malley and his negotiating team “purposefully funneled billions of dollars to [Iran] **through lack of sanctions enforcement and provision of sanctions relief that has given them somewhere between \$50 [billion] and \$80 billion over the last two and a half years.**”

When you watch the video of hundreds of Iranian missiles heading toward Israel understand this. **We gave Iran the money to pay for all those weapons and for the thousands more they still have in their arsenal.** We did that with the full understanding that those weapons would be used against Israel and against our own forces in the Middle East. In fact, **the Iranians are now publicly threatening to attack American bases if the United States takes any action in support of an Israeli counterattack.**

In the 2013 film “*Olympus Has Fallen*” the White House is overrun by rogue North Korean forces and the President is held hostage. The movie is far-fetched to say the least. The idea of foreign forces conducting an attack on U.S. soil of that scale is difficult to believe. And, yet, something just as mad and dangerous has occurred in real life today.

The man in the Oval Office has made it official U.S. policy to enrich and embolden the world’s biggest sponsor of terrorism, the Islamic Republic of Iran. **He has created an environment in which the mad ayatollahs in Tehran understand they can strike at Israel directly and in force and that they will pay no meaningful price for such actions.** Having done so, Biden has now openly announced to the world that whatever Israel does next it will be on its own. We will not lift a finger to help.

The world has shifted on its axis. Olympus has fallen just as assuredly as if it had been physically stormed and captured by foreign forces. Gerard Butler is nowhere in sight.



Sam Faddis is a retired CIA Operations Officer. Served in Near East and South Asia. Author, commentator. Senior Editor AND Magazine. Public Speaker. Host of Ground Truth.

Analysis: Iran upends decades of shadow warfare in direct attack on Israel as tensions mount at home

Source: <https://www.yahoo.com/news/analysis-iran-upends-decades-shadow-125347519.html>

Apr 15 — [Iran's direct attack on Israel](#) over the weekend upended decades of its shadowy warfare by proxy, something Tehran has used to manage international repercussions for its actions. But with both economic and political tensions at home boiling, the country's Shiite theocracy chose a new path as changes loom for the Islamic Republic.

Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#) will mark his 85th birthday Friday, with no clear successor in sight and still serving as the final arbiter of every decision Iran makes. Coming to power in the wake of Iran's devastating eight-year war with Iraq in the 1980s, Khamenei preached for years about “strategic patience” in confronting his government's main rivals, Israel and the United States, to avoid open combat.

That saw Iran invest more deeply in regional militia forces to harass Israel — such as [Hamas](#) in the Gaza Strip or Lebanon's [Hezbollah](#) militia — and contain the U.S., like with the militias that planted devastating improvised explosives that killed American troops during the Iraq war. That's extended even into impoverished Yemen, where Iran's arming of the Houthi rebels empowered their takeover of the capital and checkmated a Saudi-led coalition still trapped in a yearslong war there.

That strategy changed Saturday. After days of warnings, [Iran launched](#) 170 bomb-carrying drones, more than 30 cruise missiles and more than 120 ballistic missiles toward Israel, according to an Israeli count. Those weapons included the same bomb-carrying drones Iran supplied to Russia for its grinding war on Ukraine. Despite Israel and the U.S. describing 99% of those projectiles [being shot down](#), Iran has called the attack a success. Iranian



Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said Monday the attack was “to deter, punish and warn the Zionist regime.” Khamenei himself had called for Iran to “punish” Israel as well.

The trigger for the attack came April 1, when [a suspected Israeli strike hit a consular annex building by Iran's Embassy in Damascus, Syria](#), killing at least 12, including a top commander of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard's expeditionary Quds Forces.

However, for years, Iran and Israel have been targeting each other's interests across the Middle East.

Israel is suspected of assassinating Iranian nuclear scientists and sabotaging atomic sites in the Islamic Republic. In Syria, Israel has repeatedly bombed airports likely to interrupt Iranian weapons shipments, as well as killed other Guard officers. Meanwhile, Iran is suspected of carrying out a host of bombings and gun attacks targeting Jews and Israeli interests over the decades.

But the embassy attack struck a nerve with the Iranian government.

“Attacking our consulate is like attacking our soil,” Khamenei said April 10.

It also comes amid a moment filled with uncertainty for Iran. As Khamenei grows older, power has become ever-more consolidated in the country. Hard-liners control every lever of power within both security services and political bodies, with none of the relative moderates who once shepherded Iran's nuclear deal with world powers into existence.

That includes former President Hassan Rouhani, who led the effort. Authorities barred Rouhani earlier this year from running again to hold his seat on the Assembly of Experts, the 88-cleric body that will pick Iran's next supreme leader.

The hard-liners' grip on power has seen voter turnout drop to its lowest level since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Their stranglehold also leaves them as the only political faction to blame as the public remains incensed by Iran's collapsing economy.

The nuclear deal's demise, after former President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the accord in 2018, has seen Iran's rial currency tumble. The rial now seesaws near record lows, trading Monday at 658,000 to the dollar — down from 32,000 at the time the agreement was reached nearly a decade ago.

Already, prosecutors in Tehran have begun a criminal investigation into the Jahan-e Sanaat newspaper and a journalist over a story on the possible economic impact of Iran's attack on Israel. The judiciary's Mizan news agency described the report as “disturbing the psychological security of society and making the country's economic atmosphere turbulent.”

His case comes as other journalists and activists report being summoned by authorities, portending a new crackdown on any sign of dissent in the country.

There are also signs that authorities appear to be preparing for a new push at enforcing the country's mandatory headscarf, or hijab, laws for women. “The Tehran police — as in all other provinces — will start to confront all lawbreaking with regard to the hijab,” said Tehran police chief Brig. Gen. Abbas Ali Mohammadian, according to the semiofficial ISNA news agency.

Some women in Tehran still walk through the streets with their hair uncovered, a continued protest since the nationwide 2022 demonstrations over [the death of Mahsa Amini](#), arrested by police for not wearing a hijab to their liking. United Nations investigators say Iran was responsible for Amini's death and violently put down largely peaceful protests in a monthslong security crackdown that killed more than 500 people and saw over 22,000 detained.

A new push for hijab enforcement may reignite that anger, particularly in Tehran. Meanwhile, rumors persist that the government may soon raise the country's heavily subsidized gasoline prices. [A price increase in 2019 grew into nationwide antigovernment protests](#) that reportedly saw over 300 people killed and thousands arrested.

Those tensions, coupled with hard-liners' grip on power and Khamenei's age, signal more changes loom for the country. And while Iran said of its attack Saturday that “the matter can be deemed concluded” even before missiles reached Israel, that doesn't mean there won't be further retaliation from the country.

Iran has just exposed how impotent it really is

Source: <https://www.yahoo.com/news/iran-just-exposed-impotent-really-180000911.html>

Apr 14 – Having threatened to exact a terrible vengeance on Israel, all that Iran appears to have achieved [by launching its drone and missile attack](#) is to reveal the true extent of the Islamic Republic's military impotence.

Only one of the estimated three hundred drones and missiles the Iranians fired at Israel succeeded in reaching their targets, with the Israel Defence Forces reporting that just one had “lightly hit” the Nevatim air force base in southern Israel's Negev desert. As for the rest, the majority were destroyed long before they got anywhere near Israeli territory, intercepted by anti-missile systems deployed by an impressive coalition of allies – including the US and UK – that sprang to Israel's defence in its hour of need.

No one should be surprised that Iran's much-anticipated attempt to launch a direct attack on Israel – the first time the Islamic Republic has directly confronted Israel since its 1979 revolution – failed to have any meaningful impact. Russia's inability to achieve its war aims in Ukraine is, in part, due to the ineffectiveness



of the Iranian drones that Tehran has supplied to Moscow in significant quantities, but have proved no match for the Ukrainians' superior air defences, much of which is provided by the West.



It was the same story with Saturday night's drone and ballistic missile attack on Israel. [A combination of Israel's defence systems and interceptions carried out by the US, UK, Jordanian and French militaries](#) meant that nearly all of the 110 ballistic missiles, 30 cruise missiles and 170 drones fired by did not reach their targets, which were predominantly Israeli air and early warning bases.

Thus, far from fulfilling the pledge made by Iranian Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#) at the end of Ramadan last week that Israel must be "punished", all the drone and missile bombardment has achieved is to expose the fundamental weakness of Iran's military threat. More than that, the Iranians have demonstrated to the rest of the world their true status as a hostile state that not only sponsors a global network of Islamist terror groups but is intent on waging war against the West and its allies.

Until now, Iran has successfully managed to cover its tracks by avoiding a direct confrontation with Israel, preferring instead to rely on a deadly network of terror groups, such as Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, to do its dirty work.

This has enabled Iran to maintain a cloak of deniability about its true intentions, one that has persuaded naive leaders in the West to engage with the Iranians in the belief that compromise was possible. It was this mindset that persuaded former US President Barack Obama – with the tacit support of David Cameron's government – to negotiate the flawed nuclear deal with Iran in 2015, which made no meaningful provision for curbing Tehran's terrorist activities.

Now the mask has slipped, and [Iran's attack on Israel has revealed the Islamic Republic's true intent for all to see](#), a watershed moment that is likely to have a profound impact on how the world's major democracies view the ayatollahs in future.

Iran will no longer be regarded merely as a challenge for Western policymakers, but as [a tangible threat to Western security that must be tackled head-on](#), whether it concerns thwarting its efforts to acquire nuclear weapons or dismantling its terrorist infrastructure, both in the Middle East and the wider world. Tehran is, after all, a central player in the developing alliance of autocratic regimes, which includes Russia, China and North Korea, that is inimical to the values of Western democracy.

From now on Iran should no longer be given the benefit of the doubt when it tries to conceal its real malign activities, as has been the case with its protestations over the missile attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus on April 1, which Tehran has used as a casus belli for its failed assault on Israel.

Far from being engaged in diplomatic activity, the consulate served as a command and control centre used by Iran's Revolutionary Guard to supervise its nexus of terrorist activities throughout the region. This is why no Iranian diplomats were reported killed in the attack, which has been widely attributed to the Israelis. Those who died were high-ranking members of the IRGC's elite Quds Force, a unit that reports directly to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.



The unit was established by the ayatollahs for the purpose of exporting Iran's Islamic revolution throughout the Muslim world. To this day, a banner depicting Qasem Soleimani, the Quds Force chief assassinated in a drone strike undertaken by the Trump administration in 2020, adorns the security fence guarding the diplomatic compound.

By finally finding the courage to attack Israel directly, Iran's bluff has finally been called to the extent that, rather than constantly giving Tehran the benefit of the doubt, Western leaders should accept that they are now at war with Iran, and act accordingly.

Why Is Biden Stopping Israel From Attacking Iran's Nuclear Weapons Program?

By Alan Dershowitz

Source: <https://www.nysun.com/article/why-is-biden-stopping-israel-from-attacking-irans-nuclear-weapons-program>

Apr 15 – Iran declared war on Israel by sending more than 300 bombs in Israel's direction, aimed at civilian as well as military targets in Jerusalem and other locations. As a matter of law and morality, Israel is entitled to respond to this act of war by overwhelming, even disproportionate, force against Iranian military targets.

Yet President Biden has warned Israel not to take such permissible action. Mr. Biden wants Israel simply to proclaim victory and not respond appropriately. This will only encourage Iran to take further military action against Israel either directly or through its numerous proxies. Iran claims that Israel acted unlawfully attacking a diplomatic consulate. First, the building it attacked did not have diplomatic immunity, because it was not being used for diplomatic purposes; it was being used to plan military attacks against Israel.

Second, Argentina's High Court recently found that Iran had attacked Israel's actual embassy, killing 23 innocent people back in the 1990s. Iran's attack is an illegal act of aggressive war warranting a lawful military response.

Even if Israel were to respond moderately, Iran would continue to wage war against Israel. As long as the Mullahs run Iran, the Mideast will remain in turmoil from Iranian aggression, either direct or through its terrorist surrogates. Iran has little to lose by remaining the head of the octopus whose deadly arms do its dirty work. Iran laughs all the way to the bank as most others are killed. Why should it stop if it doesn't feel the pain of significant reprisal?

The only way to bring peace and stability to the Middle East is through regime change and democratization in Iran. Such a result would be welcomed by the majority of Iranians and all the Sunni Arab nations in regions. It would end Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis and other Iran-sponsored terrorist groups and help bring stability to the region and peace to Israel.

Accordingly, the ultimate goal of any Israeli retaliation should be regime change. The means can include destruction of Iran's nuclear weapons program, which would considerably weaken the regime. It could begin by taking down Iran's air defense systems.

It could include attacks on oil-producing facilities that enrich the regime. It could involve cyber warfare and other technological intrusions. Finally, Israel could increase the help it is already giving the growing opposition to the regime within Iran.

It will not be easy to topple the ruthless regime which brutally suppresses all dissent. But if the majority of Iranians support regime change, it is simply a matter of time before it occurs. This is unlikely to occur if the regime develops a nuclear arsenal which can shield it from outside pressures.

If the regime felt endangered, it could attack Israel with its nuclear weapons, as it has threatened to do. That is an important reason why Iran's potential nuclear arsenal should be destroyed before it can be deployed.

The Biden administration is determined not to widen the war – not to directly confront Iran militarily. This may be understandable, but it is dead wrong. This is precisely the time to confront Iran and to end the horrors of the current regime.

A lesson from history may prove relevant. In the mid-1930's Great Britain and France had an opportunity to destroy the Nazi regime, because Germany was violating the Versailles treaty by building up its military. Even Joseph Goebbels wrote in his memoir that he fully expected Germany's World War I enemies to attack before Germany became militarily invincible. He was shocked that they did not. The result was the death of tens of millions of innocent people in World War II that could have been prevented by the destruction of the Nazi regime. History is never the basis for perfect predictions about the future, but its lessons cannot be ignored.

The failure to destroy Iran's nuclear weapons program may eventually produce the death of millions of people, if Iran were ultimately to deploy weapons of mass destruction against American allies, including but not limited to Israel.

This is the time to act. Iran has provided Israel and the United States with a complete legal and moral justification for destroying its nuclear weapons program and for beginning the process toward regime change. If we do not act now, it may be too late.

Alan Dershowitz is a professor emeritus at Harvard Law School. He has written 52 books, and more than 1,000 articles, and has successfully litigated hundreds of cases, half of them pro bono. He is the author, most recently, of the books "War Against the Jews: How to End Hamas Barbarism" and "Get Trump: The Threat to Civil Liberties, Due Process, and Our Constitutional Rule of Law."



Iran's Missile Attack Against Israel

By John Krzyzaniak

Source: <https://www.iranwatch.org/our-publications/articles-reports/irans-missile-attack-against-israel>



Apr 15 – On Saturday, April 13, Iran launched a large, coordinated attack on Israel, reportedly firing more than 170 drones, 30 cruise missiles, and 120 ballistic missiles over the span of several hours. Remarkably, Israel, along with its partners including the United States, United Kingdom, and France—and reportedly Jordan and Saudi Arabia—intercepted the overwhelming majority of these, with some nine ballistic missiles causing minor damage to two Israeli military bases.

What did Iran fire?

Iran launched a variety of systems that travel at different speeds and altitudes and approach their targets from different angles. The available evidence indicates that, at a minimum, Iran used the following systems:

- Shahed-131 and Shahed-136 one-way attack drones
- Paveh land-attack cruise missiles
- Kheibar Shekan solid-propellant medium-range ballistic missiles
- Emad and Ghadr liquid-propellant medium-range ballistic missiles

Iran appears not to have used its older ballistic missiles capable of reaching Israel, including the Shahab-3 or the Sejil. Nor did it launch its recently unveiled Fattah hypersonic missile, which is likely still under development, or the heavy-payload Khorramshahr missile. The [Iran Watch Table of Iran's Missile Arsenal](#) contains details on all of Iran's deployed missiles.

What did we learn about Iran's missile capabilities?

The attack was notable for its scale: it involved approximately ten times as many ballistic missiles as Iran has used in prior attacks on other targets, as well as cruise missiles and drones. The sheer quantity provides some insight into the overall size of Iran's missile arsenal and its production capabilities. Pentagon officials have previously stated that Iran possesses over 3,000 ballistic missiles, but independently estimating the size of Iran's missile arsenal with any certainty has been difficult. That Iran's attack against Israel involved around 120 ballistic missiles suggests that the 3,000 figure is credible; Iranian military planners would presumably have allowed only a small fraction of the country's total arsenal to be employed in what could be just Iran's opening salvo of a long conflict. Moreover, it seems the ballistic missiles were all launched nearly simultaneously, suggesting that Iran may have more than 100 launchers for medium-range missiles. The available evidence points toward extensive use of mobile launchers.

Iran also demonstrated an ability to synchronize a large, complex operation. Iran's Shahed-series UAVs have a cruising speed of approximately 180 km/hr, meaning it would take them upwards of seven hours to traverse the 1,200 km-plus distance between Iran and Israel. The Paveh cruise missile, by contrast, can reach speeds of around 735 km/hr, for a travel time of at least an hour-and-a-half. Finally, Iranian ballistic missiles can reach Israel's territory in under 15 minutes. The launches appear to have been structured so that the weapons would all arrive at approximately the same time. Further, Iran also enlisted the help of its non-state partners and proxies in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, adding yet another logistical challenge.

The biggest weakness in Iran's missile force that was exposed in the April 13 attack was the weapons' inability to evade Israel's air defenses—a shortcoming all the more glaring considering the operation's relatively sophisticated overall coordination. In recent years, Iran has emphasized the development of systems that can theoretically dodge missile interceptors, although none of these was used in the attack. These include the Fattah, billed as Iran's first "hypersonic" missile, as well as a supersonic cruise missile that Iran claims to have developed. Iran's failure to penetrate Israel's defenses in any meaningful way while using its baseline missile models in this attack suggests the recent developmental focus on more intricate systems is well-founded and likely to continue. Of course, if the attack had had a greater element of surprise, or if Israel had not had help from other countries, the outcome may have been different.

How did this compare to previous Iranian missile attacks?

This was the first attack on Israel launched directly from Iranian territory, and Iran used tenfold more missiles and drones than it has used in past attacks.



Major Iranian Missile and Drone Attacks Since 2017

Date	Target	Launch location	Target Location	Ballistic Missiles Used	Stated Reason
06/18/2017	Islamic State	Kermanshah	Deir Ezzor, Syria	Zolfaghar, Qiam (~7 total)	Retaliation for June 2017 terrorist attacks in Tehran
09/08/2018	Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan	Khosrowshah	Koya, Iraq	Fateh-110 (~7 total)	Self-defense; Retaliation for sabotage acts by Kurdish separatist groups
10/1/2018	Islamic State	Kermanshah	Hajin, Syria	Zolfaghar, Qiam (~6 total)	Retaliation for September 2018 terrorist attack in Ahvaz
9/14/2019	Saudi Aramco facilities	unknown	Abqaiq and Khureis, Saudi Arabia	Delta-Wing UAV (~18 total), Quds LACM (~7 total)	Unknown. Iran denied conducting the attack
1/8/2020	U.S. forces	Kermanshah; Khorramabad?	Ain Al-Asad Airbase; Erbil airport, Iraq	Fateh-313, Qiam (mod.) (~15 total)	Retaliation for January 2020 killing of Qassem Soleimani
3/13/2022	"Mossad agents"	Khosrowshah	Erbil, Iraq	Fateh-110? (~12 total)	Retaliation for March 2022 killing of two IRGC generals in Damascus
1/16/2024	"Mossad agents"	Kermanshah; Khosrowshah	Erbil, Iraq	Fateh-110? (~ 11 total)	Retaliation for December 2023 killing of IRGC general in Damascus
1/16/2024	Islamic State	Darkhovin, Khuzestan?	Taltita, Syria	Kheibar Shekan (~4 total)	Retaliation for January 2024 terrorist attack in Kerman
4/13/2024	Israeli military sites	Multiple, including near Tabriz and Shiraz	Nevatim Airbase	Shahed UAVs (~170 total); Paveh LACMs (~36 total); Emad, Ghadr, Kheibar Shekan (~120 total)	Retaliation for April 2024 Israeli airstrike killing six IRGC officials

► Read also: [Iran's Missile Program, Past and Present](#) | [Has Iran Become the Master of its Drone Destiny?](#) | [Leveling the Field](#)

Iran's Attack Was Just a Taste of What Could Be to Come

By Jonathan Spyer

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65783/iran-attack-was-just-a-taste-of-what-could-be-to>

Apr 15 – The Iranian drone and missile attacks of 13 April brought less drama for many in Jerusalem than one might have imagined. War brings with it the disappearance of expectations of daily continuity, or of a reasonable and logical sequence of events. It has been wartime for six months now here in Jerusalem; in another way it has been wartime for the last 75 years. If one insists on drawing out the camera range still further, it has been war, or a state of emergency for Jewish people for as long as history can remember. Next week, after all, Jews worldwide will gather to read and recite a nearly 2,000-year-old text which contains the assertion that 'not only one enemy has risen up



against us to destroy us, but in every generation men rise up against us to destroy us, and God delivers us from them'.

I was at a neighbour's house when the news of the impending attack came in. We were on his balcony, drinking whisky. His 16-year-old son casually opened the door and told us that Channel 12 was reporting that drones had been launched from Iran and would reach Israel within three hours. We thanked him and continued our conversation. I was mildly surprised, I told my friend, as I had thought that the Iranians would have preferred to continue their strategy of keeping out of the line of fire, and letting junior clients do the dying for them. But perhaps this was an attempt to set boundaries in the hope of returning to that state of affairs.

I left my friend's house an hour or so later. Two hours to go until the alleged arrival of Iran's drones. The next day, it occurred to me, was going to be busy, and as any old soldier will tell you, if you have a chance to sleep, you should take it. So I turned in. Before doing so, I retrieved my pistol from its place of storage and placed it on the bedside table. It's a Sig Sauer P365, and it has become my regular companion since 7 October. Since that time, Israel's Islamist assailants have notably failed in their efforts to foment assistance from among their fellow Arabs and Muslims in pre-1948 Israel. This is in marked contrast to the previous round of violence in May 2021, when neighbourhoods in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Israel had risen up in support of Hamas in Gaza and their efforts to protect the Al Aqsa Mosque from (non-existent) attempts to harm it. But I live in a mixed neighbourhood on Jerusalem's seam line that separates west from east, and it doesn't do any harm to be careful. I awoke at about two in the morning to the sound of a series of loud booms. After a minute or so, I could hear the voices of neighbours outside, heading down to the shelter in the building's basement. The less concerned or more reckless of them stayed in the corridor. This is a sort of interim precaution that people here take. If you don't want to go to the shelter, at least get away from the windows, to somewhere near the centre of the building.

After a minute or so, I heard the booms again. Without wishing to recite credentials, I have lived in the Middle East for 35 years, and covered wars across and beyond it. This might not be worth much, but one of the things it has brought is an ability to quickly detect what is happening from the different sounds made by exploding ordnance. What I was hearing was the sound of interceptors engaging. This, on a relative scale, meant that everything was okay. After another minute or so, the sirens began. After the crescendo ended, I thought about it for a moment, then rolled over and went back to sleep. Israeli, US, British and regional air power and air defences together made 13 April a less dramatic event for residents of Israel than it would otherwise have been. All the same, it is a moment of profound strategic importance. It was the precise point at which Iran's forty-year strategy for the destruction of Israel as part of an effort to dominate the region went from the covert, proxy stage to that of overt challenge. The Iranian kinetic effort largely failed to hit its targets. But what matters is what happens next. Tehran moved to overt confrontation in response to Israel's doing so. With the killing on 1 April in Damascus of IRGC general Mohammed Reza Zahedi, Israel appeared to signal that it would no longer be bound by the tacit rules of its confrontation with Iran, according to which Tehran operates proxy Arab forces against the Jewish state, and Jerusalem responds by hitting back against the proxies. Rather, Israel seemed to be saying, if Tehran wanted to pursue a policy of war against Israel, then it should be ready for its own officers and officials to pay the price. This development was not to Iran's liking. 13 April was intended as a warning of what Iran might do if the killing of Zahedi turned out to be the opening of a new Israeli strategic approach. As the sound of the interceptors in the Jerusalem night sky (and my subsequent uninterrupted sleep) indicated, Iran's attack was a tactical failure. It is not yet clear, however, if it may yet prove a strategic success. If Iran's move serves to deter Israel from further pursuit of senior Iranian officials responsible for managing Iran's long war against it, then the attacks will have achieved their purpose. Western admonitions to Israel to [desist](#) from further action against Iran fit the Iranian plan. Tehran wants to get back to its slow takeover of the region by proxy, and its steady progress toward a nuclear capacity. 13 April was meant as a warning to Israel and the west of pursuing a strategy that might actually challenge that. Over Jerusalem and Israel, our defences proved themselves. Defence alone, however, will not bring victory.

Jonathan Spyer is director of research at the Middle East Forum and director of the Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis. He is the author of *Days of the Fall: A Reporter's Journey in the Syria and Iraq Wars* (2018).

'Nightmare Scenario': The Risks of Escalation as Israel Mulls Iran Response

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20240416-nightmare-scenario-the-risks-of-escalation-as-israel-mulls-iran-response>

Apr 16 – Iran's unprecedented attack on Israel has put the Middle East in uncharted territory. Tehran fired scores of drones and missiles at Israel on April 13, its first-ever direct attack on its archfoe. In the wake of the assault, Israel has been weighing up its options, which analysts say could range from a diplomatic offensive to isolate Iran to directing military strikes on the Islamic republic. With the risk of escalation higher than ever, the worst-case scenario of an all-out war between Iran and Israel is a distinct possibility, analysts say. "Israel will have to take intentions



into account, not just results, and this means there is a case that is going to be made in Israel for a response inside Iran — with all the risks that come with it,” said Michael Horowitz, head of intelligence at the Bahrain-based Le Beck International consultancy. While neither Iran nor Israel may want an escalation, “the dance they’ve engaged in — trying to ‘out-deter’ the other — is a very dangerous one,” Horowitz said.

Iran’s attack was retaliation for the suspected Israeli air strike on the Iranian Embassy’s compound in Syria on April 1 that killed seven Iranian commanders, including two generals.

Suspected Israeli air strikes have killed at least 18 members of the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), the elite branch of Iran’s armed forces, in Syria since December.

‘Nightmare Scenario’

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant has [said](#) Israel has “no choice” but to respond to Iran’s attack. Tehran, however, has warned its response will be “stronger” and “more extensive” if Israel retaliates.

The IRGC’s chief commander Major General Hossein Salami, on April 14 said Iran’s operation — dubbed Honest Promise — had “changed the equation” and Tehran would respond to Israeli actions rather than exercise “strategic patience.”

“Iran wants a paradigm shift and has said that from now on, every Israeli action will receive a similar response,” Farzin Nadimi, a senior fellow with the Washington Institute, told RFE/RL’s Radio Farda.

Any direct Israeli military action against Iran could trigger a full-blown war between Israel and Iran — what Horowitz calls the “nightmare scenario.” Such a scenario could drag in the United States, Israel’s key ally, and trigger attacks on Israel by Iranian proxies and pro-Iranian militant groups in the region, including Lebanon’s Hezbollah, Yemen’s Huthi rebels, and Shi’ite militias in Iraq and Syria. “If we reach this point, we may see weeks of Israeli strikes in Iran, the full-scale engagement of Hezbollah in an attack against Israel, an Israeli ground incursion in Lebanon, and Iranian attempts to close the Persian Gulf,” Horowitz said.

Iran has for years threatened to block the strategic Strait of Hormuz, a major route for world oil supplies.

Even in the absence of a direct Israeli attack on Iran, “a cycle of tit-for-tat attacks between Iran and Israel could get us there, if outside parties don’t act as they did so far to de-escalate tensions,” Horowitz warned.

‘Level of Uncertainty’

Many global powers and regional actors have called for de-escalation, including the United States, which has called on Israel to show restraint. U.S. President Joe Biden has [told](#) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Washington will not support an offensive strike against Iran, according to reports.

“The United States has enormous leverage over Israel, if it chooses to use it,” Stephen Walt, a professor of international relations at Harvard University, [told RFE/RL’s Radio Farda](#). “It has not been using its leverage.... Now, with the possibility of a wider war looming, it appears the Biden administration has told Israel that if they do anything more, they’re on their own.”

While it is not impossible for Israel to ignore Washington and take matters into its own hands, Walt said the odds of a regional conflict were slim because “most of the actors in the region do not want this to happen.”

He said the only groups that “might have an interest” in a wider war are Hamas, which is designated as a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union, and Netanyahu’s hard-line government.

Even so, there would be no real winners in a broader conflict, according to Horowitz.

“There is just no predicting how any of the warring sides will come out of an escalation, and this level of uncertainty generally isn’t good for anyone,” he said.

Crime Rates, Not the Number of Crimes, Are a Better Way to Judge Immigrant Criminality

By Alex Nowrasteh

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20240417-crime-rates-not-the-number-of-crimes-are-a-better-way-to-judge-immigrant-criminality>

Apr 17 – Yesterday, Tuesday, 16 April 2024, the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs held a hearing titled “[How the Border Crisis Impacts Public Safety](#).” My colleague David Bier testified. One of the other witnesses was Ken Cuccinelli, former attorney general of Virginia, who also served in various capacities at the Department of Homeland Security.



Cuccinelli submitted [written testimony](#) about the impact of illegal immigration on crime, stating, “Crime rates do not matter, only the raw number of crimes and the harm caused by those crimes.”

Cuccinelli was trying to refute Cato Institute research that [finds illegal immigrants and legal immigrants have](#) a consistently lower criminal conviction rate and incarceration rate than native-born Americans by channeling a common refrain I hear on Twitter and from immigration restrictionists: ‘Some immigrants commit crimes, and those crimes would not have occurred in the United States if the immigrants weren’t here.’ In an obtuse way, they have a point. But it’s a trivial point because some individuals in any large population will always commit some crimes. Even small populations of people disinclined to commit crimes contain a few individuals who occasionally do, such as [female biology professors](#).

However, the focus on crime rates matters when discussing the relative criminality of different groups and evaluating whether immigrants bring more crime than they add people to the United States.

Cuccinelli’s statement that crime rates don’t matter, that only the number of crimes matters, says nothing substantive about the potential danger that immigrants pose to Americans. Let me give an example. Under Cuccinelli’s interpretation, a city with 100 murders is twenty times more dangerous than a city with five murders. But if the city with 100 murders has a million residents and the city with five murders has only 100 residents, then the city with fewer murders is far more dangerous to the residents. The city with one million residents and 100 murders has a homicide rate of 10 per 100,000. The city with 100 residents and five murders has a homicide rate of 5,000 per 100,000, which is 500 times as great as the larger city with 20 times the number of murders.

This is an extreme example, but an example necessary to explain why crime rates are more important to understand relative to criminality and danger than the number of crimes. Which city would you want to live in?

Now, in that example, assume that 100,000 immigrants with a homicide rate [20 percent below](#) that of the resident population move to the city with one million residents. Because the immigrants are less likely to commit homicide than the longer-settled residents of the city, the homicide rate drops from 10 per 100,000 to 9.8 per 100,000, but there are eight more murders. The city got slightly safer because the increase in the population was greater than the increase in the number of murders.

That example above makes the impact of immigration on crime seem even more dangerous than it likely really is. According to [crime data](#) from 2022, 79 percent of murder victims knew their murderers where investigators knew the prior relationship. Almost half of those pre-existing relationships were familial or sexual, the other half were neighbors, friends, acquaintances, employer-employee, or a different relationship. Because families tend to be either mostly immigrants or mostly native-born Americans, and they live in different parts of the city near other similar people and tend to have friends and acquaintances who are similar—including more likely to have the same immigration status—it’s reasonable to infer that most of those eight extra homicide victims were probably also immigrants.

That doesn’t make their crimes any less heinous, but it does tell you that the non-immigrants in the city probably face even less danger than described in the previous paragraph.

A real-world example may help explain why the focus on crime rates is more important than the number of crimes. From 1970 to 2023, the number of homicides [in Detroit](#) dropped from 495 to 252, a 49 percent decrease. Whereas somebody who shared Cuccinelli’s opinion would say that this is a significant improvement, the homicide rate rose from 33 per 100,000 in 1970 to 41 per 100,000 in 2023, a 24 percent increase. The murder rate increased even though the number of murders fell because Detroit’s population fell even more from over [1.5 million](#) in 1970 to about 620,000 in 2023—a decrease of 59 percent. If you consider only murder, Detroit is a more dangerous city today than in 1970.

Focusing on crime rates rather than the number of crimes is essential to compare criminality between populations such as immigrants and native-born Americans. Otherwise, there is no basis for arguing that one or the other is more criminally inclined, which really matters when discussing public safety. Additionally, we couldn’t judge whether crime differs between geographical regions or over time without looking at crime rates because the number of crimes generally goes up with the population in a cross-section and over the long run (with some significant variation). It’s trivially easy to point to crimes committed by a member of any large population no matter how one defines it, but doing so doesn’t reveal much useful information.

What comparative crime rates reveal is that more intensive enforcement of immigration laws aimed at all illegal immigrants, not just those convicted of violent or property crimes, will not make Americans safer on average. The result would be higher crime rates, *ceteris paribus*.

An increase in the number of crimes does not mean that a society is becoming more dangerous if the population grows even more. Similarly, a decrease in the number of crimes will not signify an improvement in safety if the population falls even more. It would be a better outcome if the number of crimes falls along with the crime rate as the population increases.

Furthermore, nothing above is meant to diminish the harm, pain, and anguish felt by victims of crime no matter who the criminal is. Criminals should be punished and, if they are non-citizens, deported from the United States after serving time in prison. However, it’s clear that we have a long and arduous debate



ahead of us over immigration and crime if people with strong opinions on one side, like Cuccinelli, think that “[c]rime rates do not matter.”

Alex Nowrasteh is vice president for economic and social policy studies at the [Cato Institute](#).

Now, in that example, assume that 100,000 immigrants with a homicide rate [20 percent below](#) that of the resident population move to the city with one million residents. Because the immigrants are less likely to commit homicide than the longer-settled residents of the city, the homicide rate drops from 10 per 100,000 to 9.8 per 100,000, but there are eight more murders. The city got slightly safer because the increase in the population was greater than the increase in the number of murders.

That example above makes the impact of immigration on crime seem even more dangerous than it likely really is. According to [crime data](#) from 2022, 79 percent of murder victims knew their murderers where investigators knew the prior relationship. Almost half of those pre-existing relationships were familial or sexual, the other half were neighbors, friends, acquaintances, employer-employee, or a different relationship. Because families tend to be either mostly immigrants or mostly native-born Americans, and they live in different parts of the city near other similar people and tend to have friends and acquaintances who are similar—including more likely to have the same immigration status—it’s reasonable to infer that most of those eight extra homicide victims were probably also immigrants.

That doesn’t make their crimes any less heinous, but it does tell you that the non-immigrants in the city probably face even less danger than described in the previous paragraph.

A real-world example may help explain why the focus on crime rates is more important than the number of crimes. From 1970 to 2023, the number of homicides [in Detroit](#) dropped from 495 to 252, a 49 percent decrease. Whereas somebody who shared Cuccinelli’s opinion would say that this is a significant improvement, the homicide rate rose from 33 per 100,000 in 1970 to 41 per 100,000 in 2023, a 24 percent increase. The murder rate increased even though the number of murders fell because Detroit’s population fell even more from over [1.5 million](#) in 1970 to about 620,000 in 2023—a decrease of 59 percent. If you consider only murder, Detroit is a more dangerous city today than in 1970.

Focusing on crime rates rather than the number of crimes is essential to compare criminality between populations such as immigrants and native-born Americans. Otherwise, there is no basis for arguing that one or the other is more criminally inclined, which really matters when discussing public safety. Additionally, we couldn’t judge whether crime differs between geographical regions or over time without looking at crime rates because the number of crimes generally goes up with the population in a cross-section and over the long run (with some significant variation). It’s trivially easy to point to crimes committed by a member of any large population no matter how one defines it, but doing so doesn’t reveal much useful information.

What comparative crime rates reveal is that more intensive enforcement of immigration laws aimed at all illegal immigrants, not just those convicted of violent or property crimes, will not make Americans safer on average. The result would be higher crime rates, *ceteris paribus*.

An increase in the number of crimes does not mean that a society is becoming more dangerous if the population grows even more. Similarly, a decrease in the number of crimes will not signify an improvement in safety if the population falls even more. It would be a better outcome if the number of crimes falls along with the crime rate as the population increases.

Furthermore, nothing above is meant to diminish the harm, pain, and anguish felt by victims of crime no matter who the criminal is. Criminals should be punished and, if they are non-citizens, deported from the United States after serving time in prison. However, it’s clear that we have a long and arduous debate ahead of us over immigration and crime if people with strong opinions on one side, like Cuccinelli, think that “[c]rime rates do not matter.”

[Alex Nowrasteh](#) is vice president for economic and social policy studies at the [Cato Institute](#).

UK police officers to support Paris Olympics security operation

Source: <https://policeprofessional.com/news/uk-police-officers-to-support-paris-olympics-security-operation/>

Apr 17 – Officers from forces across the UK and Crown Dependencies will be deployed to support the French security and engagement operation during the Paris Olympics.

The announcement comes as the UK and France celebrated the 120th anniversary of their historic Entente Cordiale agreement earlier this month, marking more than a century of the Franco-British friendship.

Around 35,000 police and gendarmes are expected to be mobilised each day during the Games, with a peak of 45,000 expected for the opening ceremony. The exact number of UK officers is still to be confirmed



and the deployment will also include volunteer special constables, said the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC).

The UK officers will help French law enforcement with a range of liaison and engagement roles, as well as specialist search dogs and their handlers assisting with venue security. The NPCC says their involvement will "enhance the security and safety" of UK visitors, and the Games as a whole. With just 100 days until the start of the Games, almost half a million tickets have been snapped up so far in the UK, and scores of British people are expected to cross the Channel for the eight-week event.

The UK element of this operation is coordinated by specialist officers from the National Police Coordination Centre and is supported by the Home Office, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the Ministry of Defence, Counter Terrorism Policing UK and a range of other partners. At home, police forces will also be working with local partners to help support Olympic and Paralympic events and fan zones at a range of locations. The UK's offer of support to France is the latest in a long-standing policing and security relationship, with policing bodies between the two countries regularly sharing intelligence and learning across a range of security and public safety matters. UK policing has also shared the expertise it gained from hosting major security and sporting events, such as the London Olympics and Birmingham Commonwealth Games, as well as more routine deployments to international and European football matches. Leading the UK policing response is T/Assistant Commissioner Laurence Taylor, the NPCC lead for sporting and planned events. He said: "The Paris Olympics is shaping up to be an incredible event and I am delighted officers from across the UK can play a key role in helping to make it a success. "An event of this size and scale requires an enormous French policing operation and we are proud to offer our assistance. It gives us the chance to demonstrate the value we bring to the security and safety of the Games and also show the expertise of UK policing on an international stage. I know the benefits of this international policing approach will be something our communities can benefit from for years to come.

"This is an incredibly exciting opportunity for our officers and staff, who can hone their skills, learn from international colleagues and ultimately play a key role in keeping the public safe at an iconic sporting event."

He added: "I hope our presence will be reassuring and familiar for the droves of UK citizens travelling to France."

Home Secretary James Cleverly said: "I am pleased to offer this package of support to France for the Paris Olympics, which will build on our historic relationship. "After close collaboration between the UK and France at recent major sporting events, including London 2012, our offer will advance on years of security cooperation.

"Our police officers will provide valued experience and expertise to assist in keeping this iconic event safe for everyone attending." Minister of the Interior of France, Gérald Darmanin, added: "France and the UK have a long tradition of police cooperation, particularly for the organization of major events. In 2012, France provided assistance from its law enforcement agencies to secure the Olympic Games in London. "This summer, in Paris, we'll be delighted to be able to count on the support of our British friends for this great sporting event, which will attract many spectators from across the Channel."



Why Israel Must Hit Iran

By Jonathan Spyer

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65796/why-israel-must-hit-iran>

Apr 18 – Remember the story about the frog and the boiling water? Once popularly cited in articles and columns, it alleged that a frog placed in boiling water would immediately jump out. By contrast, the legend alleged, a frog placed in cold water which is then



slowly heated to boiling point will remain happily splashing about, unperturbed, until the water begins to boil, at which point it will be cooked alive. This story was used to illustrate the need for vigilance regarding long, slow-burning strategies of hostile intent, designed to lull us into complacency, while concealing their murderous ambitions.

This frog analogy has hopped into obscurity in recent years. That may be because it turned out not to be true. As it happens, herpetologists inform us, a frog placed in boiling water will die instantly. A frog placed in cold water which is gradually heated up, by contrast, will take immediate evasive action to extricate itself from the water, as soon as it discerns that the heat is reaching a dangerous level. The original story, that

is, represented a casual slander against the survival capacities of the frog.

Looking at the behavior of Israel and its Western allies in the Middle East in recent years, it turns out that rather than looking down at the incorrectly identified lack of survival instincts of the frog, we should, in fact, have been learning from it. The humble amphibian, it seems, knows the importance of accurately identifying a slowly building threat, and then taking a determined course of action to end it. Us? Less so.

The Iranian drone and ballistic missile attack on Israel on the night of 13 April was not intended by the Islamist rulers in Tehran to usher in a new era of conventional confrontation between Israel and Iran. It had the opposite purpose: to deter Israel from any further steps down a road that Jerusalem has appeared in recent months to be setting out on. This was the approach according to which Israel would dispense with punishing only Iranian proxies for violent attacks on Israel, but rather would begin to go after their Iranian masters also. The killing of General Mohammad Reza Zahedi and six other Revolutionary Guard commanders in Damascus on 1 April was the most recent and most significant manifestation of this new direction.

It was not to the Iranians' liking. Their strategy of proxy warfare against the Jewish state and against the broader security architecture in the Middle East has been in place for 40 years. For four decades, the mullahs have gathered, trained and armed proxy Islamist militias in the region, and used them as tools for the advance of Tehran's interests.

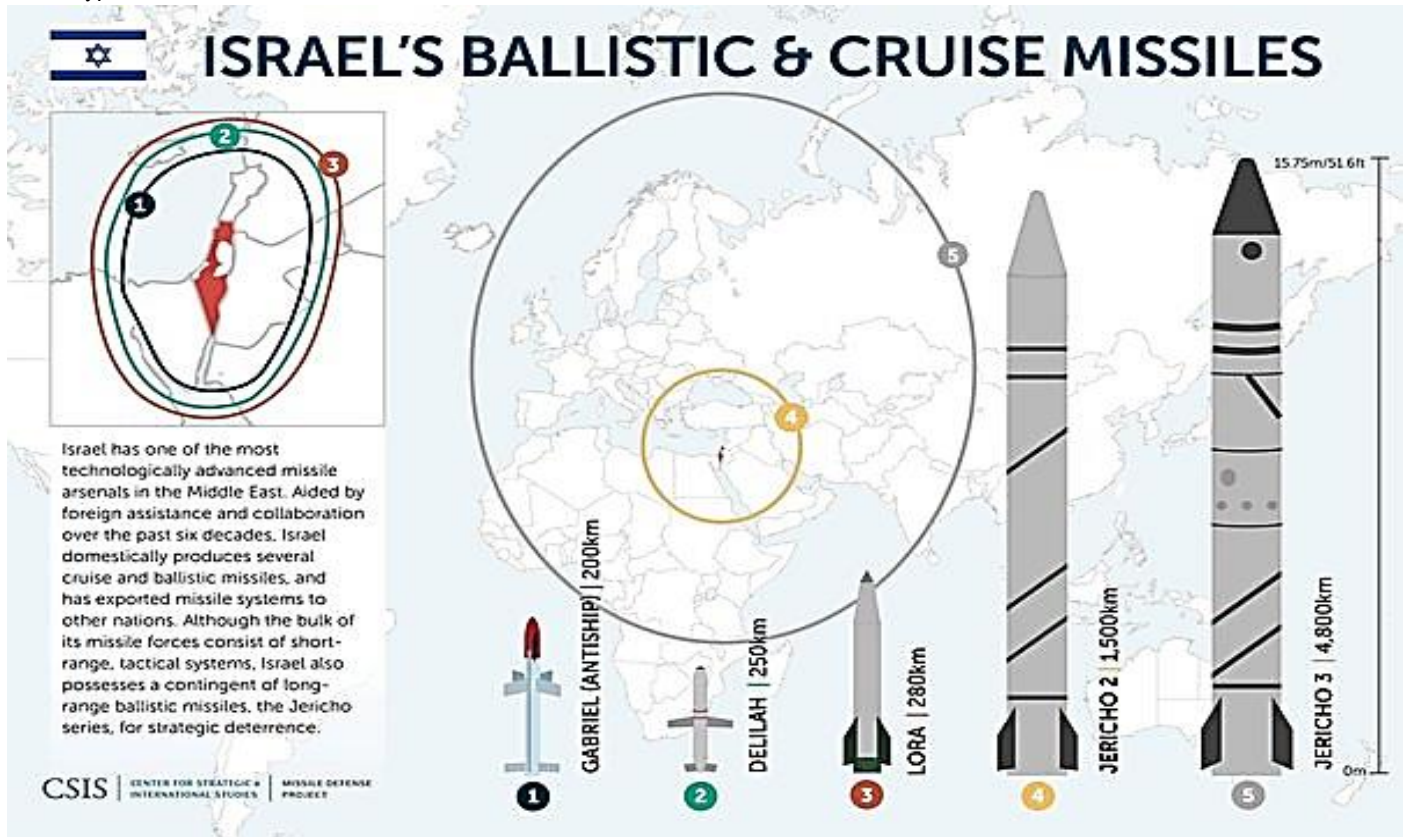
The strategy has paid off handsomely. As a result of it, Iran now effectively controls the entire land space between the Iraq-Iran border and the Mediterranean Sea. It has the capacity to paralyze shipping on one of the world's key maritime trade routes (the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden). And it has taken ownership of the Palestinian cause and turned it into a strategic force multiplier for itself. As a result of the proxy strategy, Iran has gathered two Islamist armies on Israel's borders – Hezbollah to the north, Hamas to the south – and intends to use them to subject Israel to death by a thousand cuts.

The continued successful pursuit of this strategy for regional domination, however, depends on its victims continuing to fail to discern what is happening. Should they do so, like the unfairly maligned frog, they might take action to ensure their survival. For the strategy to work, the victim must be looking elsewhere, befuddled.

The polite practice of response against proxies alone was being dispensed with. Action against the patron was beginning. This was unacceptable to Tehran. The April 13 attack was intended to raise the stakes of



a direct response to such a point that Israel, or its Western allies, or a combination thereof would be intimidated from further action of this type.



As things stand, there are indications that the Iranians may have been successful. From the Biden administration down, a chorus of voices in the West is calling for Israel to avoid further response to the April 13 attack. Western governments, frightened by the Iranian reaction, expect Israel to abandon actions of the type that might cause it to be repeated. There is an acute awareness that Iran did not seek on this occasion to use its most potent assets. Best not to annoy it further.

Air defence, even of the most effective kind, cannot substitute for a forward strategy to counter a project of aggression. Passivity and reaction will not suffice against the Iranian project for regional domination, and for the destruction of Israel. But unlike our clever frog, Western governments are still in the water, complacent, as the heat continues to rise.

Jonathan Spyer is director of research at the Middle East Forum and director of the Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis. He is author of *Days of the Fall: A Reporter's Journey in the Syria and Iraq Wars* (2018).

What Iran's Lack of Fear Means for the West

By Zvi Hauser

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65813/what-iran-lack-of-fear-means-for-the-west>

Apr 19 – On the night of September 14, 2019, the sound of explosions echoed through the oil fields of Saudi Arabia's state-owned oil company, Aramco. An attack by around 30 cruise missiles and drones evaded Saudi radar systems, struck gas storage tanks, and forced their shutdown, causing a dramatic reduction in Saudi oil production. In one fell swoop, Saudi oil exports were slashed by more than 50%. The attack, orchestrated by Iran, was described as "the most severe" since the burning of Kuwaiti oil fields by Iraq in 1991, during the Gulf War. After a week of anticipation for a significant American response, the Trump administration announced it would assist the Saudis and Emiratis with defensive forces and ammunition. This sealed the possibility of an American military strike following an assault on their Middle Eastern ally. The Americans preferred to focus solely on future defense rather than an offensive strike. A feeble voice echoed across the Middle East, reverberating from Tehran to Moscow and Beijing. Incidentally, the Aramco incident should have also highlighted that



Iran was establishing a direct conventional threat against Israel, not just a future nuclear threat. It's doubtful whether Israel and the US understood this five years ago, but this week, that lesson finally sunk in.

Since the ayatollah regime took control of Iran, it has been patiently and ingeniously implementing a strategy aimed at creating a reality where the question mark over Israel's existence becomes real, not just theoretical.

On the night of April 14, 2024, it seemed that two chinks appeared in the armor of Iran's "strategic patience." The first was Iran's decision to attack from its sovereign territory rather than through proxies. The second was the choice of a complex timing when its proxies in Iraq and Syria had not completed the necessary force buildup for a perfect multi-front campaign against Israel on the one hand, while Iran itself lacked even minimal nuclear capability on the other.

Iran chose to respond to an Israeli offensive move with a massive barrage from its territory that was 10 times larger than the attack on Aramco. More significantly, Iran stopped being fearful. It engaged in a direct confrontation with Israel at a time that seemed suboptimal for itself and defiantly acted against an explicit American presidential warning not to proceed.

Iran's overnight missile attack is a strong reminder of the loss of Israel's and America's strategic deterrence. The loss of Iranian fear is the most significant aspect of the Iranian missile attack – and it must be addressed. The "Don't" threat from the world's strongest man on the eve of the Iranian attack was met with indifference in Tehran, echoing the familiar Arabic expression "kalam fadi" (empty words). This is bad news for the US and even worse news for its allies in the region. Let's not be mistaken – the 99% interception rate is impressive, but it is a tactical achievement that does not restore Western deterrence or restore the strategic balance of power. However, conversely, an opportunity also emerged this week. The Iranian attack created a "do-over" for the failure to launch an offensive response after the Aramco incident, which led to the erosion of America's standing in the region. The overnight attack on Israel with over 330 airborne objects must not go down in the annals of Middle East history as "Aramco B". Israel and the US must seize this attack to emerge from "strategic slumber." The US has a strategic opportunity to restore its standing in the Middle East and reshape the global geopolitical order. The free and moderate world looks up to the American superpower in three conflict zones: Russia-Ukraine, China-Taiwan, and Israel-Iran. The first two conflict zones involve nuclear-capable powers, severely limiting American freedom of action. The US did not prevent the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and it is doubtful whether its conduct in the Middle East so far deters China from changing the strategic reality in the Indo-Pacific region. However, projecting American power against Iranian aggression would significantly bolster American deterrence in the inter-bloc struggle and signal to its allies, including Jordan and Saudi Arabia, that they have someone they can count on.

The free world was handed a rare opportunity on Saturday night to significantly slow down Iran's nuclear race. A robust and combined offensive would establish a credible American threat against a nuclear Iran and signal to the Iranians that the free world will not accept a new North Korea in the Middle East. The US and the West have an opportunity to act against Iran in its role as Russia's number one weapons partner. A just strike against the missile and drone facilities used in the attack on Israel and Saudi Arabia would indirectly damage capabilities aimed at Ukraine and improve the West's position on that front as well.

Israel must strive to change the geopolitical status quo in the Middle East and stop the bleeding of its deterrent power in the region. The fact that Israel's enemies fear it less could lead to war in the Middle East, which runs against both Israeli and Western interests. Israel should prioritize and focus efforts on trying to enlist the US, together with a significant Western coalition, to confront Iran's current aggression, not just the emerging nuclear threat. This is necessary to restore the deterrence equation, ensure long-term stability, and prevent bloodshed and wars in the Middle East.

Zvi Hauser, a Middle East Forum senior fellow, served as the 17th Israeli government cabinet secretary. He also served as a Member of Knesset between 2019-2022, where he held a number of positions, including Deputy Speaker of the Knesset and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

How is the Islamic Republic's Attack on Israel Related to China's Conflict with the US?

Source: <https://i-hls.com/archives/123527>

Apr 20 – Top US Officials look at the recent aerial attack of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Israel as a testing ground for the capabilities of the US's Aegis air defense system in preparation for a possible future escalation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Pentagon officials state that any future threats (especially from China) will require more and cheaper interceptors, laser systems, and weapons that can launch an attack on enemy launchers.

Pentagon tech chief Heidi Shyu and other officials spoke at the NDIA Missile Defense Conference last week, stating that the defense capabilities of Aegis in Israel and Patriot in Ukraine being tested is a cause



for celebration. Shyu also warned that the US cannot be complacent and should constantly be developing new defense and offense weapons to stay safe.

Shyu, along with Assistant Secretary of Defense John Plumb said there are many lessons for the US military to be learned from the Russia-Ukraine war and Iran's attack on Israel, the most important being that many drones and missiles can be launched at once by the enemy, which can really test the defense capabilities of the subject of such attacks. "We have to have defense at scale, because the adversary can develop cheap systems at scale and then send them simultaneously," said Plumb.

The mass drone attacks can not only severely impact the capabilities of defense systems, but also drive up the funds needed for countermeasures. Plumb added that Ukraine forces managed to shoot down cruise missiles with machine guns assisted by sensors and stated that the US should rethink its strategy and save its expensive pieces of missile defense for the last layer.

According to Breaking Defense, Shyu said that the three wings of the US Armed Forces are "developing 300-kilowatt lasers with far greater range than current counter-drone weapons." During the conference, she also emphasized the need for a comprehensive net of detection, AI-aided drone and missile recognition, followed by an additional layer of many defense systems to "actually carry out the job."

Why Does Biden Reward Adversaries and Ignore Allies?

By Michael Rubin

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65818/why-does-biden-reward-adversaries-and-ignore>

Apr 19 – President [Joe Biden](#) on May 9 will [welcome his Turkish counterpart](#) Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the White House, rolling out the red carpet as part of a deal to get Erdogan to drop his veto over Sweden's NATO membership.

The invitation will not bring peace; rather, it is the equivalent of giving brass knuckles to a wife beater. Erdogan relishes thumbing his nose at the United States. Two decades of deliberate incitement have transformed Turkey into one of the world's most anti-American countries. Turkish brown shirts repeatedly attack American servicemen in Turkey. In 2017, Erdogan sicced his bodyguards on peaceful protesters in the heart of [Washington, D.C.](#), sending several to the hospital. To date, Turkey has failed to return its henchmen to face justice or compensate American victims.

At a time when the [Middle East](#) is aflame, Erdogan pours gasoline, not water. On Wednesday, Erdogan delivered a speech before Parliament punctuated by his allies chanting "Death to Israel." The Turkish dictator accused Israel of sponsoring previous coups; never mind that Erdogan had also accused the U.S., Jews, former Islamist allies, and a range of political opponents of coup plotting now and in the past.

At the same time, Erdogan endorses Hamas. "While everyone else remained silent, we defined Hamas as a resistance movement, not a terror group," Erdogan bragged. He will now repeat that message at the White House, calculating that Biden will have neither the fortitude nor ability to debate him. Erdogan would not be wrong. After all, like every other world leader, Erdogan watches as Biden and his Senate proxies bash Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) as anti-democratic, but neither criticize Erdogan himself nor Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, currently in the 20th year of his four-year presidential term.

What makes the honor for Erdogan worse is that Biden repeatedly ignores true American allies. Consider Cyprus: Nikos Christodoulides is now slightly more than a year into his first term. Elected as an independent, he has dedicated his tenure to pushing Cyprus unapologetically and without any hesitation into the Western camp, despite inherent political risks.

Absent Christodoulides's leadership and Foreign Minister Constantinos Kombos's proactive problem-solving, the humanitarian corridor into Gaza would be dead on arrival. Whereas much of the world pays lip service to Israel's security while seeking compromises that endanger the world's only Jewish state, Christodoulides and Kombos have incorporated Israeli concerns to ensure [Israel](#) can inspect cargo in Cyprus and then maintain chain of custody to ensure Turkey, Iran, and other states do not smuggle contraband into Gaza. If any world leader deserves an American thank-you and support, it is Christodoulides.

Biden and his aides often say they seek to promote human rights, yet they increasingly [reward those who most abuse them](#). The Erdogan visit increasingly appears to be a slow-motion train wreck. As the 50th anniversary of Turkey's illegal occupation and ethnic cleansing of northern Cyprus nears, Erdogan undermines security even further, opening the door to Iranian money laundering and drones in the occupied zone and walking away from the peace process.

It is not too late, however, to kill two birds with one stone: Slap Erdogan down for his incitement while rewarding a true ally. Biden, cancel Erdogan's invitation. Do not give a platform for an anti-American, antisemitic, corrupt dictator. Invite Christodoulides in his place. Reward those willing to stick their necks out for democracy, liberalism, and American values. That would be the diplomatic shot heard round the world.



Michael Rubin is a contributor to the Washington Examiner's *Beltway Confidential* blog. He is director of policy analysis at the Middle East Forum and senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.



New crisis unfolds in Africa three years after Biden's Afghanistan debacle

By Madeleine Hubbard

Source: <https://justthenews.com/government/security/biden-removes-1000-military-personnel-niger-country-turns-toward-russia>

Apr 21 – Nearly three years after the heavily criticized U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Biden administration is facing another security crisis involving U.S. troops, only this time, it is unfolding in Africa under the growing influence of Russia, Iran and China.

The Biden administration on Friday announced it would withdraw more than 1,000 U.S. military personnel from Niger over the coming months in a move that is expected to disrupt regional counterterrorism operations. The decision came the same week that Russian paramilitary officials arrived in the country and a [whistleblower report](#) was released detailing the dire conditions facing the U.S. troops. Niger said last month that it would no longer participate in a military cooperation deal with the United States after a [junta in the country](#) last year left U.S. service members largely inactive, according to [The New York Times](#).

The U.S. and Niger have begun discussions regarding "the orderly withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country," an American defense official told [Fox News Digital](#) over the weekend.

Many of the American service members in Niger are stationed at U.S. Air Base 201, which is less than a decade old and is valued at \$110 million. Since the junta, which saw the ousting of Niger's democratically-elected President Mohamed Bazoum, troops there have mostly focused on flying surveillance drones on missions to protect the base.

Terrorism poses a serious problem for Niger. In 2022, the most recent year for which the U.S. State Department has published a [terrorism report for Niger](#), the country saw at least 180 terrorist attacks. Multiple terrorist groups are active in Niger, including Boko Haram, at least two Islamic State affiliates and one al-Qaida affiliate.

The administration's announcement Friday about the withdrawal came two days after [Florida Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz announced](#) on the House floor that his office composed an interim whistleblower report about what he called a "cover-up" that "exists to conceal the humiliating failures of the Biden administration in Niger, throughout Africa and throughout the world."

He said that the Biden administration left 1,100 U.S. troops "functionally stranded" in Niger, where they have been "pleading for help," as they have been unable to receive potable water, medical care and other basic supplies. However, the U.S. Embassy in Niger has been blocking reports about the dire conditions, Gaetz also said.

Despite this reported lack of basic supplies and military activities at the base, operations there still cost U.S. taxpayers \$1 million a month, per the Gaetz report.

The 100 Russian officials who arrived in Niger last week were part of the Africa Corps, a paramilitary group intended to replace the mercenary organization known as the Wagner Group, according to Russia's state-owned news outlet RIA Novosti.

Meanwhile, Niger also appears to be cozying up to Iran. [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported last month that Niger is reportedly exploring a secret deal that would allow Iran to access its uranium reserves to help the Islamic Republic's nuclear program.



China also appears to be strengthening ties with Niger. Last week, the [Chinese Embassy in Niger announced](#) that the two countries signed a "series of oil cooperation agreements."

Madeleine Hubbard joined Just the News as a fast file reporter after working as an editor at Breitbart News. She previously served as the special assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. She also worked at the U.S. Agency for Global Media, which oversees Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and other government media agencies. She graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a BS in journalism and minors in political science and public relations.

Iran's Attack on Israel Was a Direct Result of American Weakness

By Gregg Roman

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65825/iran-attack-on-israel-was-a-direct-result>

Apr 21 – Iran's [unprecedented firing](#) of hundreds of drones and missiles at Israel represents a serious change in Iranian policy, which heretofore has been pursued through various regional proxies. It also illustrates the consequences of American weakness. That weakness has been years in the making. In 2009, the United States balked at helping the Green Movement, in which millions of Iranians protested the cruel, corrupt Islamist regime. The uprising was ruthlessly crushed.

Similarly, the U.S. refused to involve itself in any serious way in Syria's civil war, during which Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, with crucial assistance from Iran, Russia and Hezbollah, killed hundreds of thousands of people to maintain power. In 2012, President Barack Obama drew a "red line": If Assad used chemical weapons, the U.S. military would act.

Assad [proceeded to gas](#) thousands of Syrian civilians to death. The U.S. did not enforce the red line. The Syrian government was decidedly undeterred and it was not the [last time](#) they used chemical weapons to murder civilians.

The reason the U.S. was so reluctant to intervene in these instances was obsessive pursuit of a nuclear deal with Iran.

The 2015 nuclear deal removed sanctions on Iran while doing nothing to address Iran's malign activities in the region, support for terrorism, or weapons outside the narrow scope of Iran's nuclear program. Even on the nuclear issue, the deal had a weak inspections regime and was designed to sunset within a matter of years, allowing Iran to keep its nuclear infrastructure in place.

To reach this feckless deal, the U.S. empowered the Iranian regime and weakened the Iranian opposition, ensured the survival of the murderous Assad regime in Damascus and allowed Russia's reentry into the Middle East.

The Biden administration has also weakened the U.S. position in the Middle East by appeasing Iran. Former President Donald Trump removed the U.S. from the nuclear deal but upon taking office, President Joe Biden tried to [reenter it](#). Just last month, the U.S. extended a sanctions waiver, [allowing](#) the Iranian government to access some \$10 billion in frozen funds. Such waivers and failure to enforce sanctions effectively funded the creation of the projectiles that were just fired at Israel.

The Obama-Biden policy in Eastern Europe wasn't any better. In 2014, pro-Russian forces took over the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine. Russia invaded and annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula that same year. In response, the Obama administration refused to provide Ukraine with military aid.

In August 2021, the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan in a shambolic, embarrassing fashion. It was no coincidence that Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine took place a mere six months later.

After the Oct. 7 pogrom, the Biden administration spoke powerfully and movingly about what had happened. Biden [correctly called](#) the atrocities "pure, unadulterated evil" and [pledged](#), "In this moment of heartbreak, the American people stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Israelis." The U.S. [sent carrier groups](#) to the eastern Mediterranean and weapons shipments to Israel.

But it wasn't long before the U.S. position began to crumble. Left-wing agitators lashed out at Biden, calling him "[Genocide Joe](#)." Human rights groups, the United Nations and others falsely accused Israel of



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – April 2024

committing genocide in Gaza. Some Democrats [began to clamor](#) for conditioning aid to Israel on upholding human rights with the not-so-subtle implication that Israel was serially violating those human rights.

Biden's State of the Union address [criticized Israel](#) far more harshly than it did Hamas. Senator Chuck Schumer [called for new elections](#) in Israel, undermining our ally during an existential war.

Condemnations of the Oct. 7 assault became increasingly perfunctory. The administration began to speak out of both sides of its mouth, pledging to stand by Israel while constantly [lecturing Israel](#) and [opposing an invasion](#) of Rafah, ensuring Hamas's survival and a possible Hamas victory. After the accidental killing of World Central Kitchen aid workers, Biden [called for](#) an immediate Israeli ceasefire and [told](#) Israel that future U.S. support would be dependent on Israeli protection of civilians, even though Israel's protection of civilians is [unprecedented](#).

This is the context in which Iran launched its all-out barrage on Israel. The Israeli killing of Iranian officials in Damascus may have been the immediate trigger, but years of appeasement, weakness and kicking the can down the road led to this terrible moment.

[Gregg Roman](#) is director of the Middle East Forum and a former official at the Israeli Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense.





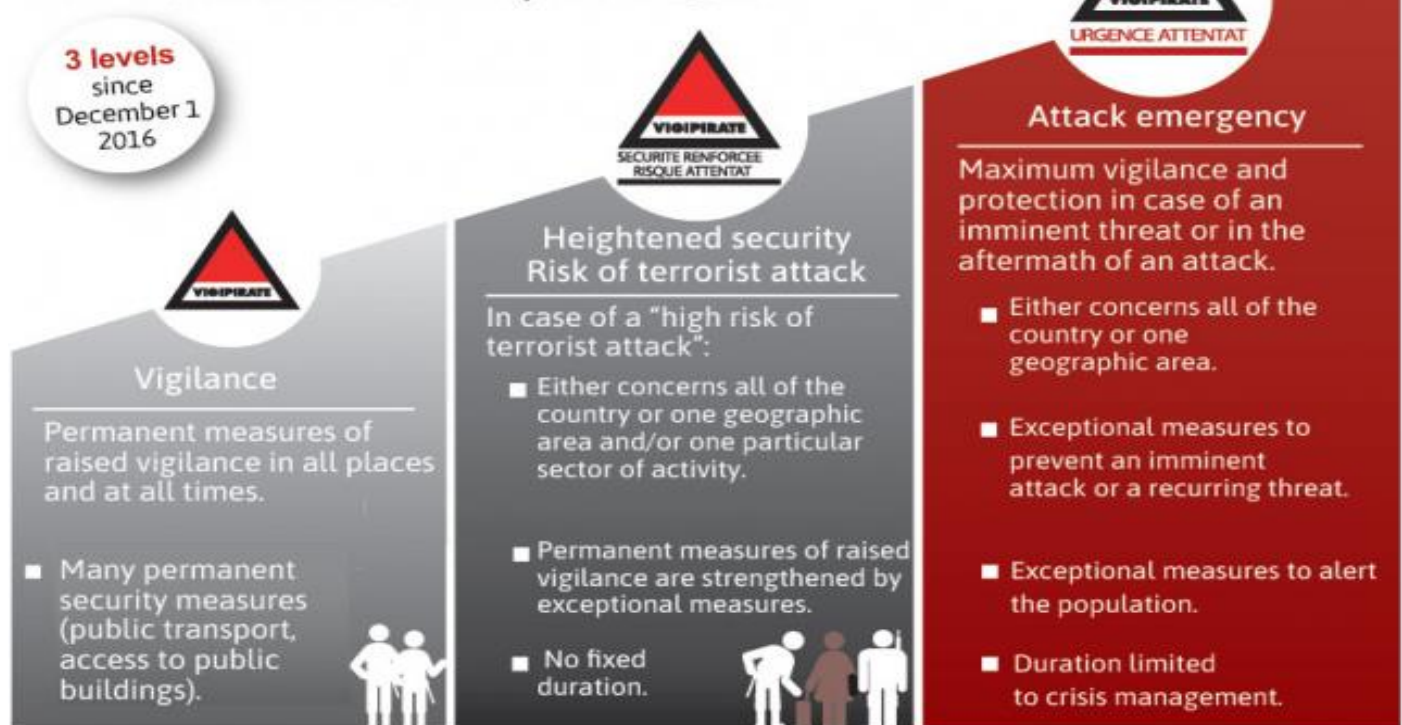
T - NEWS

France raises security to highest level after attack in Russia, worried about IS

Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/france-raises-security-readiness-highest-level-after-attack-108447935>

The levels of the Vigipirate alert system

The national threat alert system is at its highest level following the terrorist attack in Arras on Friday October 13, 2023



Mar 24 – France's government increased its security alert posture to the highest level Sunday after the deadly attack at a Russian concert hall and the Islamic State's claim of responsibility. French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal announced the decision in a post on X, saying authorities were "taking into account the Islamic State's claim of responsibility for the (Moscow) attack and the threats weighing on our country." The announcement came after President Emmanuel Macron held an emergency security meeting prompted by Friday's attack in a Moscow suburb that killed more than 130 people. The attack was claimed by an affiliate of the Islamic State group. France has repeatedly been hit by deadly Islamic State attacks, including the Bataclan theater massacre in 2015 in which extremists opened fire on concert-goers and held hostages for hours. French troops have also fought against Islamic extremists in the Middle East and Africa.

France was already on high-security alert ahead of the Paris [Olympics](#) and Paralympics this year, which are expected to draw millions of visitors to the country. Security concerns are notably high for the exceptional opening ceremony on July 26, which will involve boats riding along the Seine River and huge crowds watching from the embankments.

Macron: IS wing that claimed Moscow carnage also attempted attacks in France

Source: <https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-islamic-state-moscow-attack-russia-france/>

Mar 25 — French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday that his country's intelligence had confirmed an Islamic State group carried out the attack in Moscow on Friday, and that IS has made several attempts on French soil in recent months.

France is on high alert after Friday's [attack](#) at a Moscow concert venue, which was claimed by IS and left more than 130 people dead.

France [raised](#) its terror alert warning to the highest level after the Moscow siege, indicating that authorities believe an attack could be imminent. This level allows for increased security presence in certain public areas. It had also been put in place last October after a teacher was [stabbed](#) to death by an Islamist



While the [State Department](#) pretends Yemen is unified, even at the best of times, this was fiction; the government seldom controlled territory 10 miles outside the capital or off main roads, where local tribes instead ran supreme. Indeed, academics debate whether the natural order of Yemen is two, six, or even 30 states.

Perhaps, then, it is time to take inspiration from the past. Not only should the United States recognize the Southern Transitional Council's right to rule South Yemen as a separate country, but the international community should take inspiration from the British seizure of Aden and the French creation of Djibouti.

The Houthis are traditionally an inland and highland culture. To free the [Red Sea](#) from the Houthi scourge, the international community should organize and allow coastal communities along Yemen's Red Sea coast to form their own internationally recognized protectorate based in Hodeidah and running from the South Yemeni border to the Saudi frontier.

Far from colonialism, this would be liberation. Red Sea coastal culture is as different from Yemen's capital Sana'a and the Houthi center in Sa'dah as [Germany](#) is from Austria.

Just as in Somalia, unity and peace are mutually exclusive. It is time for a fresh approach.

Michael Rubin is a contributor to the *Washington Examiner's Beltway Confidential* blog. He is the director of policy analysis at the Middle East Forum and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

UK 'lone wolf' terror attacks more likely after Moscow massacre, warns former intelligence officer

Source: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/islamic-state-talent-spot-new-32438760>

Mar 26 – Lone-wolf attacks against the UK are more likely in the wake of the concert hall massacre in [Moscow](#), a former intelligence officer warns. The threat of violence is heightened after gunmen killed at least 130 people in an attack at the [Russian capital's Crocus City Hall](#) venue on Friday. Islamic State Khorasan claimed responsibility for the attack and one ex-intelligence officer told the Daily Mirror: "This particular branch of Islamic State has proved to be resourceful and ruthless. "They appear to be trying new methods and will be actively trying to radicalise and talent-spot



new recruits in the UK on the internet. The threat to the UK may be different than that to continental Europe, as Islamic State could target lone-wolf types online." ISK said it would attack [Russia](#) again after four suspects were paraded in court with obvious injuries. The suspects, all Tajikistanis, were bruised and one with a bandaged head is thought to have lost an ear. One was brought in on a stretcher.

[Dalerdzhon Mirzoyev, 32, Saidakrami Rachabalizoda, 30, Muhammadsobir Fayzov, 19, and Shamsidin Fariduni, 25, all face terrorism charges](#) (Image: AFP via Getty Images)

Islamic State said: "To all brutal Russians, including Putin: Broadcasting videos of prisoners being tortured by you has increased the thirst of thousands of brothers for your blood."

ISK, based in [Afghanistan](#), Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan, is increasingly attacking Europe, an ex-FBI terror expert also said. Ali Soufan said: "The Moscow attack is another sign that Islamic State's Afghan branch is rebuilding its external operations capability and remains perhaps the most potent of all Islamic State's affiliates and branches that comprise its global network."

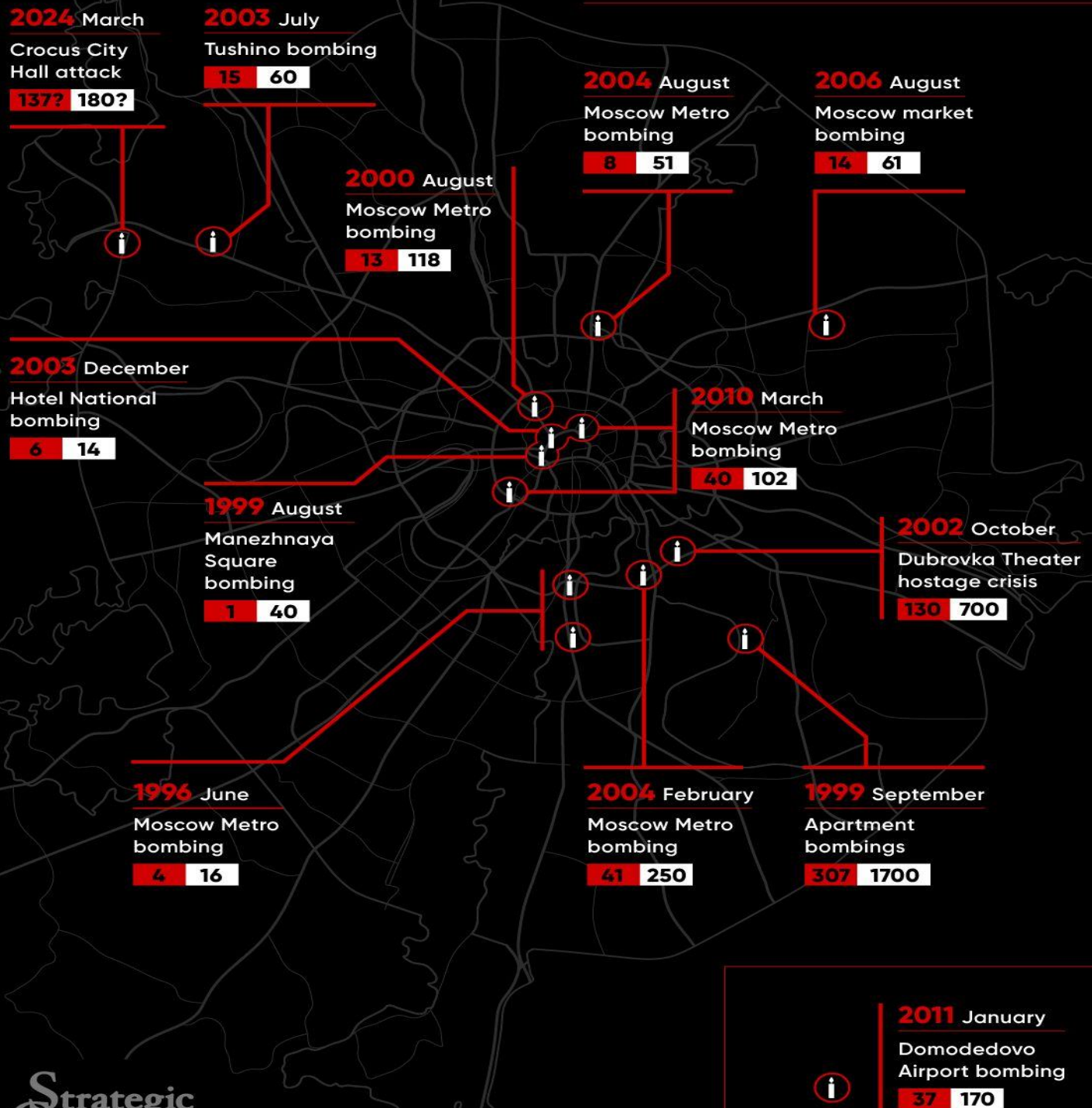
He added: "ISK has also been linked to a growing number of European plots, including one earlier this month where two individuals were arrested in Germany for planning a terrorist attack on Sweden's parliament." After warnings from its DGSE spy agency, France has put itself on the highest threat level. Italy has also raised its alert status. The UK's remains at the less-urgent level of "substantial" – two notches below the highest level, "critical", but it does mean that agents think an attack is likely.



Terrorist Attacks in Moscow Since 1991

Moscow has been a major target for terrorists since mid-1990s. In most cases, the terrorist attacks were perpetrated by religiously motivated extremists from the Caucasus region labeled by the western mainstream media as "freedom fighters".

killed  Injured 





After France, Italy stepped up measures against Terrorism

Source: <https://sarajevotimes.com/after-france-italy-stepped-up-measures-against-terrorism/>

Mar 25 – After France stepped up security measures, the Italian Ministry of the Interior on Monday decided to step up counter-terrorist surveillance in Italy, following the attack in Moscow in which terrorists killed at least 137 people, for which the Islamic State claimed responsibility.

During a meeting at the Ministry of the Interior, the National Committee for Public Order and Security concluded that “it is important to continue the extensive surveillance activities of the police and intelligence forces, including on the Internet, in order to identify possible risky situations on the national territory” and that surveillance should be especially strengthened in during the Easter holidays and in locations where a large number of people gather, writes the Italian agency Ansa.

Italian State Secretary Alfredo Mantovano said on Sunday that the main terrorist threat to Italy is “lone wolves” and not organized groups like the one that attacked a concert hall in Moscow on Friday.

“The threat is not so much from organized groups. I believe that a group like the one that acted in the attack on Moscow, which had to be trained and have logistical support, would have been intercepted in Italy sooner,” Mantovano told RAI television.

French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal announced earlier Monday, after a meeting of senior security and defense officials with President Emmanuel Macron, that the government had raised its terror alert to the highest level.

Attal said in a post on X that the decision, which comes months before Paris is set to host the Olympics, was made “in light of the Islamic State’s claim of responsibility for the attack in Moscow and the threats pressing our country.”

France’s terror alert has three levels, with the highest level being activated ahead of an attack in France or abroad when the threat of an attack is imminent. This allows for the introduction of extraordinary security measures such as increased patrols by the armed forces in public places such as railway stations, airports and religious sites, Hina news agency writes.

Belgium says 650 jihadists, other extremists on radar

Source: <https://www.courthousenews.com/belgium-says-650-jihadists-other-extremists-on-radar/>

Mar 26 — Belgium’s anti-terrorist agency on Tuesday said 650 people considered to have jihadist and other extremist ties are under surveillance in the country. The data was published as Belgian officials stressed they are doing everything to prevent attacks after at least [139 people were killed in Moscow](#) in a massacre claimed by the Islamic State.

Belgium was deeply shaken by IS bombings in 2016 and its latest brush with jihadist violence came last October when a Tunisian gunman killed two Swedes in an attack claimed by the group.

The 650 individuals are part of a list that all security forces can access, and 88% “follow a jihadist ideology,” the Ocam agency said. Among them, 426 individuals are identified as “foreign terrorist fighters” — people who traveled or sought to travel to a conflict zone to rally a terrorist movement. About 9% and 2% of the individuals are under surveillance because of their far-right and extreme-left links. The other 1% represent “various threats” that are anti-elite or linked to political strife overseas.

Belgium’s terror level remains high at three, one below the highest, which means there is a “serious” but not “very serious” risk of an attack. Neighboring France raised its level on Sunday.

“To move to level four, we really need to have concrete elements of an imminent attack and at the moment, we do not have these elements in Belgium,” said Ocam chief, Gert Vercauteren.

This level, which applies to the whole country, does not exclude the possibility of an increase on a local level or for certain events and sensitive visits, he added. **The 650 figure for 2023 represents a drop of around 7% compared with 2022.**

REALLY?

EDITOR’S COMMENT: Preemptive deportations would be a good idea! Otherwise, good luck to be needed soon!

Defining the Terrorist Attack Cycle

Source: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/defining-terrorist-attack-cycle>

Terrorist attacks and criminal operations often require meticulous planning and preparation. This process takes place in a six-stage attack cycle: target selection, planning, deployment, the attack, escape and exploitation. During the target selection and planning stages, terrorists conduct preoperational surveillance to determine the target’s patterns of behavior if it is an individual or possible weaknesses and attack methods if the target is a



building or facility. After a target is selected and surveilled, operational planning for the actual attack begins. During this phase, the who, how, where and when of the attack are determined. To make these decisions, the plotters must conduct more surveillance, initiate logistic support and assemble the attack team. When the planning stage is complete, the terrorists deploy for the actual attack — the point of no return. In the deployment stage, the attackers will leave their safe houses, collect any weapons, assemble any improvised explosive devices being used, form into teams and move to the location of the target.

THE TERRORIST ATTACK CYCLE



EDITOR'S COMMENT

If you did not neutralize terrorists just before deployment, a successful attack is imminent.

If counterterrorism and law enforcement personnel have not stopped them by this point, the terrorists will press home their attack. In the beginning phases of the terrorist attack cycle, planners must determine the method of escape and the precise timing for implementing the escape plan. Without such planning, those carrying out attacks are further vulnerable to detection and capture — an eventuality that risks limiting future operations due to the loss of the operatives and also to the intelligence that law enforcement can glean from the detainees. (In suicide attacks, militants obviously do not need to take into account an escape route.) After the perpetrators successfully stage an attack and

escape, they will attempt to derive additional value from it by generating publicity. The goal — beyond flaunting the success and spreading terror — is to gain wider support and sympathy from those most inclined to agree with the perpetrators' goals and tactics. The best way to elicit widespread coverage, of course, is to carry out spectacular, brazen and particularly violent acts or attacks against prominent people — meaning potential media reaction is considered during the target selection phase of the attack cycle.

PT

PERSPECTIVES
ON TERRORISM

VOLUME XVIII, ISSUE 1

MARCH 2024



International
Centre for
Counter-Terrorism



The Handa Centre for the Study
of Terrorism and Political Violence

Articles in [Volume XVIII, Issue 1](#) of *Perspectives on Terrorism* take a closer look at the themes of prosecuting terror in US federal cases, insurrectionary anarchism and anti-government extremism, assessing the risk of civil wars and terrorism in post-conflict situations, and feminist response



to incel radicalisation. This issue also includes two research notes - assessing the link between terrorism and socio-spatial embeddedness and violent non-state actors' use of armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

The Issue concludes with a new Bibliography on risk assessment of terrorism and a short compilation of the latest CT book releases.

Resources

- ❖ **Risk Assessment of Terrorism** | Compiled and selected by Judith Tinnes
- ❖ **Counter-Terrorism Bookshelf: Nine Books on Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism-Related Subjects** | Reviewed by Joshua Sinai

Moscow Attack Shows Troubling, Lethal Reach of ISIS

By Bruce Hoffman

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20240327-moscow-attack-shows-troubling-lethal-reach-of-isis>

Mar 27 – The mass casualty theater attack in Moscow was a reminder that affiliates of the Islamic State have reorganized and infiltrated even powerful states. ISIS has staged over half-a-dozen attacks in Russia since 2016. The movement has long deemed Russia as much of an enemy of the Muslim people as the United States.

Is it plausible that ISIS has the capability to mount such an attack?

Absolutely. ISIS has staged over [half-a-dozen attacks in Russia since 2016](#). The movement has long deemed Russia as much of an enemy of the Muslim people as the United States. In taking responsibility for the March 22 attack, ISIS [credibly claimed](#) “let crusader Russia and its allies know that the mujahideen do not forget to take revenge.”

In its founding-leader’s first speech following the declaration of the Islamic State’s caliphate in July 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi singled out for attack “Jews, the crusaders, [and] their allies” and referred to them “being led by America and Russia and being mobilized by the Jews.” So, motive and intention are clear. In terms of capability, ISIS clearly already had an established presence in Russia given the arrests of [twenty ISIS operatives](#) there in the past year alone.

Russia had recently reported foiling an attack in Moscow by the ISIS Afghan affiliate. Does that group have ability to plan and mount attacks outside of Afghanistan?

Yes. In testimony before Congress a year ago, U.S. Army General Michael Kurilla, head of U.S. Central Command, [warned that ISIS-Khorasan](#), the branch believed to have been responsible for the Moscow concert attack, could execute “external operations against U.S. or Western interests abroad in under six months with little or no warning.” In January 2023 the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, Christine Abizaid, told congress that ISIS-K was the “threat actor I am most concerned about. We see concerning indications of ISIS-Khorasan in Afghanistan and its ambition that might go beyond that immediate territory.”

The group’s ability to strike in even heavily secured environments was demonstrated this past January when dual suicide bombings killed 84 persons in Kerman, Iran, during ceremonies commemorating the fourth anniversary of the killing of Qassem Soleiman, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps’ Quds Force commander. As with the latest incident in Moscow, the United States had warned Iran, as had Russia, of what was believed to be an impending terrorist attack.

How is ISIS organized these days?

A 2023 United Nations Monitoring Team report explained how ISIS-K had adopted a network-based system in place of its previous top-down structure. This is believed to have given the group additional flexibility as well as the capability to [“fend off attack as part of a five-year plan with short-term and long-term objectives.”](#) The number of ISIS-K fighters was estimated at between 4,000 and 6,000 persons hailing not only from Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also from Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkey and, most importantly in the context of the Moscow concert attack, from Russia and several Central Asian countries. The presence of [Russian fighters within its ranks since at least 2017](#), and the knowledge and operational access they bring, have likely enhanced ISIS-K’s ability for some of them to operate in their native country.



Why didn't Russia heed the recent terrorism warning from U.S. officials?

The United States earlier this month had warned Russia that [“extremists have imminent plans to target large gatherings in Moscow.”](#) No more specific information as to the target, the timing, or the type of attack was provided—at least according to published reports. Accordingly, the warning was bereft of the “actionable intelligence” that might have enabled Russian authorities to implement effective security measures.

Nonetheless, this again underscores the advantage of shock and surprise that terrorists possess against their state opponents. Terrorists can conceivably attack anywhere, at any time of their choosing, using whatever tactics and weapons they possess. It is impossible for governments, even with suitable advance warning, to defend every target, everywhere across a city much less a country from every possible type of attack.

[Bruce Hoffman](#) is the Shelby Cullom and Kathryn W. Davis Senior Fellow for Counterterrorism and Homeland Security at CFR.

Moscow Attack Conforms to ISIS's Call to 'Kill Them Wherever You Find Them'

By Raymond Ibrahim

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65721/moscow-attack-conforms-to-isis-call-to-kill-them>

Mar 27 – Was the Islamic State (ISIS) behind the Crocus City Hall terror attack in Moscow that killed 139 and wounded 182 on Mar. 22, 2024, or not?

Not only did the Islamic State claim the attack, but the Western mainstream is agreed that it was, indeed, behind it. On Mar. 25, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said, ISIS bears the sole responsibility here — the sole responsibility. And Mr. Putin understands that. ... [T]here is no evidence — absolutely no evidence that Ukraine was involved here.

Jean-Pierre specifically referred to a March 7 public advisory which warned Americans in Russia to stay away from concert venues due to a threat of attacks by "extremists."

Russia, on the other hand, while agreeing that the perpetrators were, in Putin's words, "radical Islamists," believes that they were ultimately working for — hence captured [fleeing](#) to — Ukraine.

Where's the truth?

Unfortunately, it's hard to take the "word" of the Biden administration (on *anything*). Moreover, it is only to be expected that it would shield Ukraine — its close ally and recipient of \$75 billion + in U.S. tax dollars — from any suspicion. As for warning against — meaning foreknowing about — Islamic terror attacks targeting Russian concert halls, this fact can be understood, and is being understood in Russian circles, in a completely different way.

Finally, that Muslim terrorists would randomly pick Russia, of all nations, to attack now — when it is at war with another Western nation — does seem to be more than a "coincidence."

And yet — especially concerning this last observation — there are some overlooked points to consider that do lend weight to the view that ISIS is indeed behind the attack.

For starters, and as discussed in this [article](#), because ISIS and its followers are strict and literal adherents to Islamic teachings, their behavior often comes off as counterintuitive if not downright erratic.

For instance, in early January ISIS issued a statement arguing that true Muslims must not support or fight on behalf of the Palestinian Authority; that "Palestinian liberation" was a joke; and that Shia Iran — while presenting itself as the great enemy of Israel — is the true enemy of Muslims (in fact, the ISIS communique came a day after ISIS took credit for a terror attack on Kerman, Iran, where some 100 were killed).

Needless to say, many Muslims were shocked by these assertions and actions (prompting renewed allegations that ISIS is a creation of the CIA, etc.). And yet, all of ISIS's seemingly counterintuitive claims were (as more closely discussed [here](#)) consistent with Islamic teachings.

As one example, why should Muslims support or fight for the Palestinian Authority against Israel, ISIS argued, when the PA is secular and does not enforce sharia — meaning it is an apostate entity that only pays lip service to Islam? Why bother empowering one infidel (PA) over another (Israel)?



As for what, according to ISIS, Muslims *should* be doing, this was reflected in the title of the terror group's communique — "[Kill Them Wherever You Find Them](#)" — a paraphrase of Koran 9:5, known in Islamic jurisprudence as the "Verse of the Sword" (which has alone [abrogated](#) 124 other, more peaceful, verses):

[K]ill the *mushrikin* [pagans, idolaters, in short, non-Muslims] wherever you find them, capture them, besiege them, and lie in wait for them on every way.

More to the point, ISIS expounded on how best to realize Koran 9:5 by urging the "lions of Islam" — meaning any would-be jihadists — to, Chase your preys whether Jewish, Christian or their allies, on the streets and roads of America, Europe, and the world. Break into their homes, kill them and steal their peace of mind by any means you can lay hands on. ... [D]etonate explosives, burn them with grenades and fiery agents, shoot them with bullets, cut their throats with sharp knives, and run them over with vehicles. ... Come at them from every door, kill them by the worst of means, turn their gatherings and celebrations into bloody massacres, do not distinguish between a civilian *kaffir* [infidel], and a military one, for they are all *kuffar* [infidels] and the ruling against them is one.

What happened in Moscow completely conforms to this call by ISIS, irrespective of all suspicions and curious circumstances (war with Ukraine, etc.). On the Koran's mandate to "kill them wherever you find them," Muslims — ethnic Tajikis, descendants of the Turco-Tatars who [terrorized Christian Russia for centuries](#) — found a large "gathering and celebration" of their historic archenemies, and turned it into a "bloody massacre."

Such is the seeming caprice and nihilism of Islamic terrorism: it knows no bounds and can strike at any time and any place, without rhyme or reason — as evidenced by all of the random terror attacks to plague Western cities in recent years: the Madrid 2004 and London 2005 train bombings (193 and 56 killed, respectively), the many in France, including Paris 2015 and Nice 2016 (137 and 87 killed), Brussels 2016 (35 killed), and Barcelona 2017 (24 killed), to name but a very few.

While one can read much into any of these attacks — why they occurred when and where they did — such attacks could also be mere manifestations of Allah's open-ended command to kill "infidels" wherever and whenever they are found.

[Raymond Ibrahim](#), author of [Defenders of the West](#), [Sword and Scimitar](#), [Crucified Again](#), and [The Al Qaeda Reader](#), is the Distinguished Senior Shillman Fellow at the Gatestone Institute and the Judith Rosen Friedman Fellow at the Middle East Forum.

France assesses Paris Olympics terrorist threat in light of Moscow attack

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/28/france-assesses-paris-olympics-threat-in-light-of-moscow-attack>

Mar 28 – The French interior minister, Gérald Darmanin, has met intelligence services to assess the terrorist threat to the country, [after the Moscow concert hall attack](#) claimed by Islamic State raised fresh security fears over the Paris Olympics. One of the biggest security challenges facing the organisers of the Games in the French capital is to protect the [opening ceremony](#) on 26 July. It is planned to be an unprecedented, open-air extravaganza, which for the first time in Olympic history will not take place within the confines of a stadium, but instead involve a flotilla of **94 boats** carrying thousands of waving athletes down a **6km** (3.7-mile) stretch of the Seine, followed by a **further 80 boats** carrying media and security, while an **estimated 222,000 people gather along the river's edge and 200,000 more watch from buildings**.

More than 45,000 police will be mobilised, with snipers on rooftops and elite officers poised on boats. **Airspace** will be shut down within a **150km radius** around [Paris](#) during the ceremony, as the security services prepare for the potential threat of drone attacks.

Darmanin has promised that French police and intelligence services will be ready for the extraordinary security operation and said that while the Games were an obvious future target for attacks, huge efforts and resources had been allocated to the wide-scale security and intelligence operations.

"France, because we defend universal values, and are for secularism ... is particularly threatened, notably during extraordinary events such as the Olympics," Darmanin told reporters this week after the Moscow attack raised questions about a potential threat from abroad. "The French police, gendarmes, prefects, intelligence services, will be ready," he added, saying that "we have a very effective intelligence system. We stop plots developing almost every month."

A [poll by Elabe for BFMTV](#) this week found that although **80% of French people were worried about terrorism**, 59% were optimistic that France would successfully keep the Games secure. A total of 57% of French people thought the Olympics opening ceremony should go ahead in the open-air.

French intelligence agencies are screening up to a million people before the Games, including athletes, staff, volunteers and people living close to key infrastructure, according to the interior ministry.



After the Moscow attack on 22 March that killed at least 140 people, Paris upgraded its **terror threat level to maximum** – the country has in the past been a frequent target of jihadist attacks, including coordinated Islamic State attacks in Paris on the [Bataclan concert hall, restaurants and the national sports stadium](#) in November 2015.

Emmanuel Macron said this week that the IS entity believed to be behind the Moscow attack – known as Khorasan, which is a branch in Afghanistan and Pakistan – had also sought to attack France. “This particular group made several attempts [at attacks] on our own soil,” the president told reporters. The prime minister, Gabriel Attal, said two planned attacks had been prevented in France since the start of the year.

The Islamic State issued a stark warning on March 28, urging its followers to target "crusaders" worldwide, singling out the United States, Europe, and Israel. Their message, shared on ISIS's Telegram channel, hailed the recent attack on a Moscow concert hall, where over 140 people lost their lives. Abu Huthaifa al-Ansari, speaking on behalf of the group, not only praised the violence but also called for continued conflict in Palestine.

Earlier this month, Darmanin told a senate commission that the type of risk being assessed during the Olympics included the possibility of a move by a lone attacker inside France, or groups outside France paying criminals inside the country to stage an attack. He said there was no specific threat from a foreign group. “We can say today that groups such as al-Qaida or Islamic State have the intention to attack the west and France in particular, but they don't have the means at the moment.” But, he added, intelligence was not a “precise science”. Céline Berthon, the French domestic intelligence chief, told the same senate commission that the terrorism risk had been increasing for more than a year. She spoke of “the return of an Islamist terrorism threat linked to external theatres, which we must not lose sight of, amid a tense geopolitical context with terrorist organisations who target the west and will no doubt, as the event approaches, seize the opportunity which the Games are”.

There is also the potential for cyber-attacks during the Games, whether it be hackers targeting the stopwatch clocks at timed events or targeting broader computer systems or transport infrastructure.

The head of France's national cybersecurity agency told Agence France-Presse this week that the Paris Olympics would be a target, including for foreign states “that want to disrupt the Games because they are not happy for one reason or another, and who might try to disrupt the opening ceremony or cause problems on public transport”. The warning from Vincent Strubel, director general of the French Cybersecurity Agency (ANSSI), comes amid strained diplomatic relations between France and Russia over the war in Ukraine. Strubel told AFP: “Clearly, the [Olympic Games](#) are going to be a target. We are getting ready for all types of attacks – everything we see on a daily basis but bigger, more numerous and more frequent.”

EDITOR'S COMMENT: French pride and stubbornness might cost lives! Cancel the Seine Opening ceremony and certain open space athletic events. Try to think as terrorists who are not going to use high-end technology but common objects. Four people caused chaos in Moscow; 20 were involved in 2015 Paris attacks; 10 in the 2008 Mumbai four-day massacre.

Moscow attackers 'were high on ISIS' top drug “Chemical Courage” making them into killing machines'

Source: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/moscow-attackers-were-high-isis-32467502>

Mar 29 – The ISIS terrorists responsible for a massacre in [Moscow](#) fuelled their reign of bloodshed by dosing themselves up on [Captagon](#) - a form of amphetamine which allows them to slaughter without a shred of guilt.

The drug, which the fighters call chemical courage, lowers inhibitions and disables fear, allowing fighters to kill indiscriminately. The suspects - Saidakram Rajabalizoda, 30, Muhammadsabir Fayzov, 19, Dalerjon Mirzoev, 32, and Shamsidin Faridouni, 25 - are thought to have ingested the substance before slaughtering 147 at the Crocus City Hall last Friday.

Officials tested the terrorists and found traces of the drug, according to local news outlet BAZA, citing Russian law enforcement sources.

●► Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yly3Jsn-UlQ>

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Captagon provides coward terrorists the balls they do not have!



Improving the Security of Soft Targets and Crowded Places

By John S. Hollywood, Keith Gierlack, Pauline Moore, et al

A Landscape Assessment | Published Mar 27, 2024

Source: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2260-1.html



Research Question

1. How can prevention, protection, and response and recovery investments reduce the risk of casualties from attacks on ST-CPs?

Attacks on soft target s and crowded places (ST-CPs) represent a significant challenge. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security requires research and development to assess methods for reducing the propensity and loss of life from these types of attacks. In response, researchers from the Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center conducted a comprehensive landscape assessment of the threat to ST-CPs and corresponding security measures. This assessment integrated literature reviews, attack plot analyses, grant data reviews, and security cost modeling to identify both needs for improvement and recommended research and investment priorities for addressing those needs.

The number of attack plots is broadly aligned with regional population counts. The most-common motivations for ST-CP attacks have been personal, followed by terrorist and extremist motivations. Education and private buildings (workplaces) are the most-frequently targeted types of ST-CPs. Attacks on ST-CPs that have large, accessible crowds, such as houses of worship, shopping malls, restaurants, bars, and nightclubs, had the highest average lethality.

To defend ST-CPs, a layered approach has security measures work together to improve the chance that an attack will be stopped or mitigated. Prevention measures stop attacks before they reach execution; however, the public needs to know what warning signs to look for and how to report them, and threat assessment teams need to assess tips and follow up appropriately. Access control systems, such as locks, secured windows, and secured entryways, have been effective and efficient. Bystanders and security have both stopped attacks; groups of bystanders tackling shooters have been highly effective.



Key Findings

The conditions that a would-be attacker must fulfill to successfully execute a high-fatality attack are collectively the attack chain; interrupting that chain can prevent or reduce casualties

- An attacker must carry out many steps to complete a high-fatality attack. The attacker must become fully committed, plan, acquire weapons and skills, and make other preparations without being detected and reported by others. Once on scene, the attacker must get through the site's security layers and engage a crowd without being stopped quickly.
- A system-based, or layered, approach helps security measures work together to improve the chances that an attack will be stopped or mitigated at any of these steps, guarding against single points of failure.
- Prevention measures are perhaps the most-important factors in interrupting the attack chain because they can and have halted many plots before they reached execution. Reports of warning signs have been key. However, the public must know what to look for and how, and authorities need threat assessment teams and training to assess tips and follow up appropriately.
- Access and entry-control systems, including locks, secured windows, and secured entry spaces, have been effective and efficient in protecting against attackers.
- Both bystanders and on-scene security have been effective in stopping attacks. Groups of bystanders tackling shooters have been highly effective in ending attacks.

Recommendations

- Seek methods for deterring and dissuading would-be attackers from becoming committed to plots.
- Develop indicators and training to detect suspicious seeking of weapons and ammunition.
- Develop enhancements to "see something, say something" campaigns.
- Develop and evaluate campaigns to reduce hoax threats of violence.



- Develop rules and processes for assessment, monitoring, and follow-up with reported threats, including processes for initial wellness checks.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of site security technologies in stopping simulated attacks.
- Study the social costs of security measures more.
- Develop a model strategy for open and nonsecure spaces, such as parks, parking lots, shopping malls, and restaurants.
- Improve command and control, leadership, and coordination during attack responses.
- Study alternatives to traditional voice radio communications during attack responses.
- Continuously track and analyze mass-attack plots.
- Determine whether some ordinary criminal shootings should be treated as mass attacks on ST-CPs.
- Seek ways to reduce the mass psychological impacts of attacks.
- Support detailed tracking of grant spending related to ST-CP security.
- Fund enhanced public education and training on what to report and how and on how to respond to an active attacker.
- Provide funding to cross-organizational threat assessment teams, security teams, and managers, and provide training on how to report on and how to respond during an incident.
- Fund access control systems.
- Fund medical supplies and training to match updated medical standards.

The Islamic State Five Years After the Collapse of the Caliphate

By Colin P. Clarke and Christopher J. O'Leary

Source: <https://www.fpri.org/article/2024/03/the-islamic-state-five-years-after-the-collapse-of-the-caliphate/>

Mar 29 – Five years ago this March, the final remnants of the Islamic State's so-called caliphate were physically destroyed. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish militia backed by the United States and its allies, swept into the [Syrian desert town of Baghouz](#) to capture the group's remaining fighters and their families. ISIS's last stand was the culmination of a years-long effort led by the United States and its allies to uproot the group from its Levantine headquarters.

At its apex in 2015-2017, ISIS-controlled territory larger than the size of Great Britain. They boasted tens of thousands of [foreign fighters](#) from dozens of countries and were capable of launching complex terrorist attacks in the heart of Europe, as the group did in Paris in November 2015 and Brussels in March 2016. Its propaganda inspired lone wolves to embark on murderous rampages targeting crowds of civilians with vehicles. Its fighters beheaded Western hostages and used the videos and images to seduce radicalized recruits.

But in early 2024, the organization is nearly unrecognizable from what it was just five years earlier. Although ISIS is no longer anchored in the Middle East, a rump of hardcore fighters remain in Iraq and Syria, where they conduct guerrilla-style operations. Many of its most [prolific and active branches](#) are now located in Africa, where ISIS branches regularly claim attacks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Egypt, Mozambique, and Nigeria.

Its franchise in Afghanistan, ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K), is the group responsible for last week's terrorist attack at a [theater in Moscow](#), in addition to attacks in Iran and Türkiye so far this year. ISIS-K is currently the Islamic State's standard bearer and most operationally capable affiliate, drawing comparisons to al-Qaeda's Yemeni branch in the Arabian Peninsula, which developed a reputation for its ability to develop high-profile terrorist plots.

The Islamic State's Global Network of Affiliates

ISIS and its affiliates have demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt and survive. After sustaining significant territorial losses in the Middle East, substantive reductions in its ranks, and the elimination of key leaders, ISIS still managed to transform itself into a decentralized network of regional branches, many of which retain the capacity to launch high-profile terrorist attacks. Built around its central Salafi-Jihadi extremist ideology that has continued to resonate with aspiring extremists, ISIS has leveraged social media, internet forums, and a sophisticated propaganda apparatus to promote its violent and virulently sectarian messaging to vulnerable and disenfranchised populations.

ISIS's ability to recruit, inspire, radicalize, and mobilize its supporters to violence is directly tied to its effectiveness in exploiting historical grievances and its deliberate strategy to establish franchise groups in regions characterized by political corruption, vast socioeconomic disparities, and weak governance.



FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

remaining fighters and



ISIS's effectiveness in identifying the most fertile ground to promote its ideology and brand has led to the birth of affiliate groups in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, Somalia, Mozambique, West Africa, and the southern Philippines, among other places. Each affiliate's alliance with ISIS is contingent on their pledge of baya't (allegiance) to ISIS's core leadership. The organization's decentralized structure permits the affiliates to operate semi-autonomously outside a traditional rigid command-and-control structure. Still, it allows their activities to nest within the group's global terrorism enterprise and reinforce its overall objectives.

Where ISIS Poses the Greatest Risks

The most glaring example of where the fight against ISIS has been left unfinished is in Iraq and Syria. Approximately 46,500 women and children are still languishing in [dilapidated refugee camps](#) in northeastern Syria, while an additional 9,000 ISIS fighters are held in detention centers administered by the SDF. On multiple occasions, ISIS fighters have attempted to free their comrades from prison, even launching an offensive campaign termed "Breaking the Walls," focused on assaulting prisons and inciting prison riots. In January 2022, ISIS attacked a prison in Hasakah, Syria, sparking a [ten-day battle](#) and allowing hundreds of jihadist prisoners to escape.

In Africa's Sahel region, a vast semi-arid swath of desert that encompasses western and north-central Africa, the Islamic State Sahel Province and Islamic State West Africa Province control pieces of territory that stretches from the West African littoral to the Lake Chad Basin. According to the [Global Terrorism Index](#), four of the top ten countries most impacted by terrorist violence last year are located in this region: Burkina Faso (1), Mali (3), Nigeria (8), and Niger (10).

ISIS-K has been [linked to a growing number](#) of plots in Europe recently. Three men were arrested in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia over alleged plans to [attack the Cologne Cathedral](#) on New Year's Eve in 2023. The raids are linked to [another three terror arrests](#) in Austria and one in Germany that took place on December 24. The four individuals were reportedly acting in support of ISIS-K. Going back a bit further to July 2023, Germany and the Netherlands coordinated arrests targeting an [ISIS-K-linked network](#) suspected of plotting attacks in Germany. Nearly four years ago, German police halted a plan to attack US and NATO military bases in Germany (April 2020). The four Tajik nationals arrested were reported to be in contact with Islamic State [officials in Afghanistan and Syria](#).

Challenges in Countering the Islamic State

The ISIS-K attack in Moscow last week was a stark reminder of the group's reach. It demonstrated that, with the deadly marriage of capability and intent, Islamic State jihadists could look to target US embassies, facilities, or personnel abroad. The Islamic State is attracted to unstable regions, stretching its tentacles into Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. An increasing operational tempo offers a hint at the group's plans.

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the [9/11 Commission report](#) spoke of terrorism as a generational challenge. For those who lived through the aftermath, as we both did, that challenge remains despite the understandable fatigue of the Global War on Terrorism. The zeitgeist in Washington and Brussels is all about 'great power competition.' Major challenges loom on the horizon, and it makes sense to divert resources to counter China's rise and deal with the complexities presented by artificial intelligence. Yet, pivoting from counterterrorism will have serious consequences for the United States and its allies.

After British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was nearly killed by the Provisional Irish Republican Army in a bombing at the Brighton Hotel in 1984, the 'Provos' [scolded her](#): "You have to be lucky all the time. We only have to be lucky once." The Islamic State, and ISIS-K in particular, are aware of those odds and, without significant counterterrorism pressure, will not relent.

What Can Be Done?

First, it is crucial to recognize that the Islamic State and its affiliates are persistent and enduring threats. While the group's territorial caliphate has been dismantled, its ideological appeal and metastasizing global disposition pose significant security challenges to the United States and the international community more broadly. Acknowledging that we still have a terrorism problem is not a failure but a reality. This acknowledgment also sets the conditions for ensuring counterterrorism remains a strategic priority, which requires proper resource allocation and facilitates the development of comprehensive strategies to address the complexity of the threat.

Looking back, we must at once recognize that ISIS has shown an instinctive ability to adapt to shifting dynamics, allowing it to grow stronger over time and, in turn, remain a lethal global enterprise despite years of an aggressive US-led counterterrorism onslaught. While ISIS's territorial caliphate has been dismantled, its ideological appeal endures. The Islamic State's global network has shown an instinctive ability to adapt and take advantage of shifting geopolitical circumstances. The United States has largely maintained a monolithic counterterrorism strategy for the past two decades based almost exclusively on military force, and in some ways, it has been a victim of its own success. Exquisite intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, augmented by armed drones and special operations forces (SOF) raids,



have produced endless tactical victories against terrorist networks, but a strategic breakthrough has proven elusive. America has developed an incredible capability to locate members of foreign terrorist organizations and remove them from the battlefield in some of the most far-flung corners of the globe. However, despite the tactical effectiveness against terror networks, groups like ISIS continue to grow in size and lethality like a widespread metastatic cancer. Looking forward, it is imperative to understand that terrorism is a complex challenge that spans across political, military, diplomatic, and economic spheres. Therefore, the need to construct a counterterrorism strategy that transcends military might is self-evident. Developing and implementing a fully evolved counterterrorism strategy that blends “soft power” components with limited hard power tools, employing the full spectrum of national power, is a critical first step. Vitally important to the success of such an approach is ensuring synchronization of efforts across government agencies and departments. This is required to ensure that disparate programs and resources are complementary and do not conflict with each other or work at cross-purposes, as some security and economic development initiatives might. A whole-of-government approach is more than just policy jargon; when done properly, it can minimize redundancies and ensure that manpower and resources effectively contribute to the broader strategy. While some have pointed to the reallocation of resources away from counterterrorism and over to the strategic competition space to counter China and Russia as a concern and excuse for why the violent extremist problem continues to grow, substantial capabilities and tools remain to address the challenge of terrorism. Our next two decades will most certainly mirror the past two decades, with the threat continuing to expand, unless we acknowledge the deficiencies in our current application of a military force-dependent counterterrorism plan and pivot to a more comprehensive approach in concert with our international partners. An innovative and adaptive counterterrorism strategy that ensures interagency collaboration, resource optimization, synergy of effort, and international cooperation is desperately needed to address the complex challenge of terrorism and ensure the safety and security of the United States and its allies. The terrorist massacre that Hamas perpetrated on October 7th and the more recent attack by ISIS-K in Moscow should serve as a wake-up call that the threat from terrorism is still very real.

Colin P. Clarke is a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and the Director of Research at The Soufan Group.

Christopher J. O’Leary is a Senior Vice President for Global Operations at The Soufan Group.

Major terrorist attacks in Europe and Russia (2000-2024)

By ChatGPT

Providing a comprehensive list of all the terrorist attacks in European countries and Russia since 2000, including details such as death toll, injuries, weapons used, and number of terrorists involved, would be an extensive task. However, I can highlight some of the most significant terrorist attacks in terms of impact:

1. **November 2015 Paris Attacks:**
 - Location: Paris, France
 - Death Toll: 130 people killed
 - Injured: Hundreds wounded
 - Weapons: Assault rifles, explosives
 - Number of Terrorists: Multiple coordinated attackers, primarily affiliated with ISIS.
2. **March 2004 Madrid Train Bombings:**
 - Location: Madrid, Spain
 - Death Toll: 191 people killed
 - Injured: Over 2,000 wounded
 - Weapons: Improvised explosive devices (backpack bombs)
 - Number of Terrorists: Connected to Al-Qaeda-inspired groups.
3. **July 2005 London Bombings:**
 - Location: London, United Kingdom
 - Death Toll: 52 people killed
 - Injured: Over 700 wounded
 - Weapons: Suicide bombings (explosive devices in backpacks)
 - Number of Terrorists: Four suicide bombers linked to Islamist extremist ideology.



4. **2016 Brussels Bombings:**
 - Location: Brussels, Belgium
 - Death Toll: 32 people killed
 - Injured: Over 300 wounded
 - Weapons: Explosive devices
 - Number of Terrorists: Coordinated attack involving several individuals associated with ISIS.
5. **April 2017 Saint Petersburg Metro Bombing:**
 - Location: Saint Petersburg, Russia
 - Death Toll: 15 people killed
 - Injured: Dozens wounded
 - Weapons: Explosive device on a metro train
 - Number of Terrorists: The attacker, who was linked to Islamist extremist ideology.
6. **July 2016 Nice Truck Attack:**
 - Location: Nice, France
 - Death Toll: 86 people killed
 - Injured: Over 400 wounded
 - Weapons: Truck driven into crowds
 - Number of Terrorists: Single attacker, claimed allegiance to ISIS.
7. **September 2004 Beslan School Siege:**
 - Location: Beslan, North Ossetia-Alania, Russia
 - Death Toll: Over 330 people killed (including more than 180 children)
 - Injured: Hundreds wounded
 - Weapons: Explosives, firearms
 - Number of Terrorists: Around 30 militants associated with Chechen separatist groups, including Riyadus-Salikhin Battalion.
8. **October 2002 Moscow Theater Hostage Crisis:**
 - Location: Moscow, Russia
 - Death Toll: At least 170 people killed (including hostages and terrorists)
 - Injured: Over 700 wounded
 - Weapons: Explosives, firearms
 - Number of Terrorists: Around 40 militants from the separatist group led by Movsar Barayev.
9. **March 2010 Moscow Metro Bombings:**
 - Location: Moscow, Russia
 - Death Toll: 40 people killed
 - Injured: Over 100 wounded
 - Weapons: Explosive devices in the metro system
 - Number of Terrorists: Two female suicide bombers associated with Islamist extremist groups.
10. **December 2013 Volgograd Bombings:**
 - Location: Volgograd, Russia
 - Death Toll: At least 34 people killed (including both bombings)
 - Injured: Dozens wounded
 - Weapons: Explosive devices (bombings at a railway station and on a trolleybus)
 - Number of Terrorists: Believed to be connected to Islamist militant groups in the North Caucasus region.



When Feminists Stand for Hamas, You Know the West Is Over

By Giulio Meotti

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65741/when-feminists-stand-for-hamas-you-know-the-west>

Apr 01 – There were shameful scenes at a Women's Rights Day demonstration in Munich's Marienplatz. Palestinian flags everywhere. Israeli flags were not welcome. Left-wing and pro-Palestinian groups





insulted and pushed several Jewish women. Among the participants was the president of the Jewish community of Munich, Charlotte Knobloch (a Holocaust survivor).

Same scenes in Paris. Insults, attempted aggression, threats, and throwing of projectiles, the pro-Israeli collectives had to be exfiltrated from the Paris demonstration organized on the occasion of International Women's Rights Day. "We heard slogans like 'dirty Jews,' 'Nazis,' 'Israeli murderers,'" Mélanie Pauli-Geysse, president of No Silence, told *Le Point*.

No media or feminist organization in Europe is following the testimonies reported by the survivors of the family of Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the caliph of Daesh.

Eggs, broken bottles, rubber bullets. "It was then that the situation worsened, we were only able to walk a few minutes before being exfiltrated by the police for our safety."

In *L'Express*, Sarah Barukh wrote: "There were Iranian, Afghan, Israeli, Pakistani, Yazidi, and others. We denounce the devastation of apartheid imposed by radical Islamism. We stand alongside women who are victims of barbaric traditions such as excision, in France and elsewhere." Next to her, Mona Jafarian, who fled from Iran, and Father Desbois, a Catholic priest who returned from Ukraine and recounted his life with Yazidi women, his arrest in Iraq, and his death sentence in several countries designated as lands of Islam because "I expressed words of sympathy towards the Jews."

Meanwhile, the Algerian writer Kamel Daoud writes that no media or feminist organization in Europe is following the testimonies reported by the survivors of the family of Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the caliph of Daesh. His daughter, his wives, his sexual slaves are interviewed on Saudi TV to talk about the caliph.

"No relaunch in newspapers or platforms, no analysis, no echo," writes Daoud. "Western neo-feminism, crumbling into particularisms, is indifferent to this 'Muslim' scene where the condition of millions of women parades, beyond digital screens and the effects of ideological bubbles."

A forced tour should then be immediately organized to the Hamas cages under Gaza where Hamas is holding Israeli female hostages. And for those who don't feel like it, there is still the exhibition in London in which the conditions of imprisonment of the Israelis were recreated based on the testimonies of those who were exchanged in November.



Nothing seems to interfere with the ideological excitement these old and perverse peacocks derive from a barbarism they mistake for rebellion.

There is a pathological reluctance across the West to believe that Hamas has raped and mutilated women. "It didn't happen" or "where is the proof?" The speed with which these people went from saying "believe women" and #MeToo to "show the rape photos or it didn't happen" is mind-blowing.

Rape denial is so widespread that some have felt compelled to take to the streets to raise awareness of Hamas's sexual crimes. British Jews and their (few) allies gathered near BBC headquarters to say "rape is not resistance." Some wore jogging bottoms with stains between the legs, in solidarity with Naama Levy, the 19-year-old Israeli woman seen in that very state shortly after the Hamas pogrom.

The West went from "believe women" to "believe terrorists."

Nothing seems to interfere with the ideological excitement these old and perverse peacocks derive from a barbarism they mistake for rebellion in an unholy marriage of Western self-loathing and Islamic Jihad. They are willing to do anything to save the most squalid moral vanity and be able to continue selling us their "goodness." Except that it is really evil.

Giulio Meotti, is cultural editor for *Il Foglio*, is an Italian journalist and author and a Middle East Forum Writing Fellow.

The Moscow Attack Showed Terrorism Is Asia's Problem Now

By **Kabir Taneja** | Fellow and the head of the Strategic Studies Programme's West Asia initiative at the India-based Observer Research Foundation.

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/04/02/moscow-crocus-isis-afghanistan-putin-terrorism/>

As [attention shifted eastward](#) toward the Islamic State-Khorasan (ISK), the group's branch based in Afghanistan, [contrarian views](#), mostly in Russian media but amplified on social media platforms, of this being a false-flag operation designed by the West simultaneously took off.

In between such distractions, the victor was the Islamic State. The group's spokesperson, known by his nom de guerre Abu Hudhayfah al-Ansari, [released](#) a 41-minute audio message a few days after the Moscow attack. Curiously, the message, titled "By God, this religion [Islam] will prevail," mentioned Russia only in passing. It however congratulated Islamic State ecosystems and *wilayas* (Arabic for provinces), or offshoots, on a successful 10 years of the caliphate.

The message takes the listener on a world tour of sorts, highlighting the group's presence across regions from Africa to Southeast Asia, challenging the notion that it is a spent force. Ansari also congratulated the group's fighters for their campaigns against the Chinese, Russians, Sikhs, and Hindus. It also chastised the very idea of democracy—a long-standing ideological position for most jihadi groups.

What to Make of the ISIS-K Attack on Moscow

By **Daniel Byman**

Source: <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/what-to-make-of-the-isis-k-attack-on-moscow>

Mar 27 – The [Islamic State claimed responsibility](#) for the terrorist attack that killed over 130 people at the Crocus City Hall theater in Moscow on March 22—the worst terrorist attack Russia has seen in 20 years. [U.S. officials attributed specific blame](#) to the Islamic State Khorasan Province, commonly referred to as ISIS-K, a group based in Afghanistan and Pakistan that professes loyalty to the Islamic State's overall leadership.

Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to point the finger at Ukraine for the attack. But not only has the Islamic State claimed responsibility for it—the targeting of a concert hall also fits with the Islamic State's past practices, as they conducted similar attacks in France and the United Kingdom. Russia's own history dealing with jihadist threats from Chechnya and elsewhere in the Caucasus also suggests a jihadist link: Chechen jihadists in [2002 attacked a theater in Moscow](#). Ukraine has killed Russian commanders, politicians in occupied territory who collaborated with Moscow, and even the daughter of one of Russia's leading nationalists, but it has never conducted a mass attack on civilians.

As disturbing as the slaughter of innocents in Russia is, there are ominous signs that this attack is part of a new wave of ISIS-K attacks. ISIS-K formally emerged in the Afghanistan-Pakistan area in 2015, bringing together a group of disgruntled jihadists who opposed the Taliban and pledged loyalty to the then-ascendant Islamic State's self-declared caliphate in Iraq and Syria. They embrace a far more radical



version of jihadism than even the Taliban, opposing any accommodation with states or entities they see as Islam's enemies and embracing sectarianism, among other beliefs. These legitimate concerns, however, must be seen in the context of significant progress against the broader jihadist movement, including the Islamic State itself.

Let's start with the bad news. In addition to the devastating attack in Moscow, ISIS-K appears to be on a spree. The beginning of 2024 saw an ISIS-K [terrorist bombing in Iran](#) that killed almost 100 people. That bombing attacked people commemorating the death of Qassem Soleimani—the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps leader whom the U.S. killed in 2020. These bombings marked a substantial shift for the group, which before then had focused primarily on attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where it battles both the regime in Islamabad and the Taliban. (Despite the Taliban's own jihadist credentials, ISIS-K regards the Taliban as too willing to compromise with infidels.) In July, Germany and the Netherlands proceeded with [a series of arrests](#) to disrupt ISIS-K plots. Gen. Erik Kurilla, the head of U.S. Central Command, [testified in front of a House committee](#) that ISIS-K "retains the capability and the will to attack U.S. and Western interests abroad in as little as six months with little to no warning."

These disturbing trends are balanced by the Islamic State's overall decline, with the group (along with other jihadist organizations) far less active in Europe and the United States in recent years. In 2022, two people died in Europe from [jihadi attacks](#); in 2015 and 2016, those numbers were 151 and 142. The Islamic State in 2023 [tried to capitalize on Israel's war in Gaza](#), inspiring several successful attacks in France and Belgium, but none of these resulted in mass casualties, and numbers were far lower than during the group's peak years of violence. The last successful jihadist attack on U.S. soil was in 2019, when Mohammed Al-Shamrani killed three sailors at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida.

Part of the reason for this significant decline is the U.S.-led campaign against the core Islamic State. The [group persists](#), but since 2019 it has not controlled territory, reducing its appeal for recruits and its ability to raise money and plan operations. [Global intelligence operations](#), coordinated by the United States, have disrupted many cells. Al-Qaeda, too, has been hit hard, and it still has not named a leader [since the United States killed Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) in July 2022.

After the Moscow attack, it would be a mistake to underestimate ISIS-K, but more extra-regional attacks do not always mean a stronger group. Many militant organizations embrace terrorism, and international terrorism in particular, because they are failing in their original strategy. Since its formation in 2015, ISIS-K has been attempting to wrest power from the Taliban, which has been [repressing the group](#). In 2023, the group's [operations against the Taliban plunged](#), and its financial resources also bottomed out. Pakistan, too, has put pressure on the group because of its ties to Pakistani militant groups and attacks in Pakistan itself.

Within such circumstances, high-profile terrorist attacks become a form of propaganda for a weak group. They attract massive media attention and, in the case of the Moscow attack, show that the group is standing up to a hated enemy. This violence contrasts with the Taliban, which has tried to [normalize relations with Moscow](#), enabling ISIS-K to proclaim that it is the only organization fighting for the faith. However, these external attacks often do not lead to progress on the ground for the group, and there is no reason to think that the Taliban or Pakistan will ease their pressure on ISIS-K.

Finally, U.S. intelligence also seems to have some ability to monitor ISIS-K. After the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, [analysts feared](#) the United States would be vulnerable to terrorist surprise attacks from the region. However, the United States [warned Iran](#) before the ISIS-K attack at the beginning of 2024 and [did the same for Moscow](#) before the latest attack. Terrorists need to be lucky only once, but this repeated warning suggests at least some U.S. capacity to monitor the group and disrupt future attacks. Extra vigilance is in order, but ISIS-K itself faces many limits.

[Daniel Byman](#) is a professor at Georgetown University, Lawfare's Foreign Policy Essay editor, and a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic & International Studies.

France excludes 800 individuals from Olympics over security fears

Source: <https://www.thelocal.fr/20240401/french-security-cut-800-without-good-intentions-from-olympics>

Apr 01 – Around 800 people who "did not have good intentions" have been excluded from the Paris Olympics over security fears, French interior minister Gerald Darmanin said Sunday.

The list includes 15 deemed to represent the most serious threat to national security.

"The French people must know that we absolutely check everyone who approaches the Olympic Games -- so there are the volunteers, torch-bearers, the people who will welcome you," Darmanin told broadcaster LCI.

"There are a million checks to be done; we have already carried out 180,000 checks. We have excluded 800 people including 15 on 'Fiches S' (the dossier of the most serious threats)."



"That means that there are people who wanted to register to carry the flame, to be volunteers at the Olympic Games and who clearly did not have good intentions."

Darmanin specified that among those excluded were "radical Islamists" and "radical ecology people who want to protest". French security forces are screening up to a million people before the Olympics, including athletes and people living close to key infrastructure, according to the interior ministry.

Ahead of the start on July 26, all 10,500 athletes selected for the Olympics and 4,400 for the Paralympics will be subjected to background checks, as will their coaches and medical staff, in addition to 26,000 accredited journalists.

The Olympics are set to take place from July 26th-August 11th followed by the Paralympics from August 28th-September 8th. France was placed on its highest alert for terror attacks in October after a suspected Islamist burst into a school in the north of the country and stabbed a teacher to death. The country has been consistently targeted by Islamic extremists over the last decade, particularly by the Islamic State group, while Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza is seen as exacerbating domestic tensions.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: These 15 "Fiches-S" and those classified as such later on will continue to move around freely (under observation)? Why not be deported or jailed? If something bad happens will mass media write again that terrorists were known to authorities? Prevention is better than treatment doctors say!

The persistent threat of global terrorism

By Peter Brookes | A U.S. national security analyst.

Source: <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/threat-global-terrorism/>

Apr 04 – International terrorism, perpetrated by the likes of al-Qaeda and Islamic State, kept the world living on a knife's edge for nearly two decades following the 9/11 attacks. Until recently, public concern about terrorist threats seemed to have receded. After the defeat of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) five years ago, terrorism understandably faded in the minds of many (though not all) politicians, policymakers and the public.

Hamas's devastating assault on Israel in October 2023 and ISIS's brutal attack on Moscow in late March 2024 should serve to jolt the international policy community out of its complacency on the threat of terrorism. It is now clear that a reevaluation of the risks posed by international terrorism and its potential impact on global stability is necessary, as violent extremism will persist and possibly increase.

Hamas's wake-up call

Hamas's attack on Israel last fall was unexpected even by Israel, a state with one of the most highly capable intelligence services in the world. The assault also served as a perfect example of a low-probability, high-consequence terrorist event, replete with wide-ranging political, economic and security consequences.

Today, going on six months of war between Israel and Hamas, the Middle East and its periphery are deeply unsettled. There are serious concerns about a broader regional conflagration that could involve the United States, Israel, Arab states, Lebanese Hezbollah, Syria and Iran, further undermining global stability, which is already challenged by the two-plus-year-old Russo-Ukrainian war.

For example, in opposition to Israel's offensive in Gaza, Yemeni Houthi rebels have attacked international shipping targets in the Red Sea with Iran-supplied weapons, drawing American and British military retaliation. As a result, maritime shipping and insurance rates have skyrocketed and sea-borne supply chains have been interrupted. Much of the Red Sea's maritime traffic is now diverting around Africa's Cape of Good Hope for safety, vastly increasing shipping times and cost.

Weak national governments and porous borders allow terror groups to find safe places to plan, operate and move easily between countries.

The Gaza war has also short-circuited the promising diplomatic engagement between Israel and Saudi Arabia and has chilled the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran. International and internal political and social tensions over the conflict have also risen in many countries outside the Middle East, including [in the United States](#) and Europe.

The larger point is that a terrorist event – even if localized – can have outsized political, economic and security repercussions. With this in mind, let us take a brief tour through the major terror actors that have the capacity to undermine stability and prosperity – locally, regionally and globally.



Iran as a state sponsor

Support from a nation-state is often critical to non-state actors such as terror groups and insurgent movements. State governments are generally those with the resources – including funding, weaponry, training and even intelligence – that can make smaller allies and proxies more effective in advancing their causes and mutual interests.

Washington has long considered Iran the foremost state sponsor of terrorism. Through its Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), Tehran trains, equips and advises several Middle Eastern terrorist and militant organizations, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (in Gaza and the West Bank), [Hezbollah](#) (Lebanon and Syria), Kata'ib Hezbollah (Iraq) and [the Houthis](#) (Yemen). These groups loosely form Iran's infamous "axis of resistance."

Tehran has worked with the Taliban in Afghanistan to advance its anti-Western agenda, and its relationship with al-Qaeda has long been murky and troubling. While sectarianism is an important dynamic in Middle Eastern politics, the Iranian Shia regime has no problem [aligning itself with like-minded Sunni groups](#) that support its ambitions, such as the Taliban and Hamas.

Due to its perceived success in using proxy militant groups since 1979, Tehran is likely to continue supporting terror groups and surrogates that amplify Iran's ability to advance and protect its interests and provoke and punish its enemies.

Islamic State seeks another caliphate

ISIS lost all of its territory in Iraq and Syria by spring of 2019, and has lost four senior leaders since then to counterterror operations. Yet while Islamic State is bloodied, it is not necessarily bowed. The allure of an "idyllic" Islamic caliphate – which it fundamentally achieved for a three-year period – still motivates supporters.

Some 10,000 ISIS fighters and 50,000 associated others (including the family members of fighters) are currently jailed or held in camps in Syria. Many of their countries of origin refuse to repatriate them due to concerns that they include ISIS sympathizers who will radicalize and recruit others to their cause, bringing radicalism and violence back home.

A large breakout from a prison or camp – something that has been tried before – could catalyze a [revitalization](#) of what was once the world's largest and richest "terrorist army," a force that took and held territory in two sovereign states for a few years.

Even now, ISIS is still operationally active, especially through its affiliates beyond Iraq and Syria. ISIS has terror branches, networks and cells in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, the Philippines and Yemen, as well as in African countries like Egypt, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and Mozambique.

Facts & figures

The global impact of terrorism, 2023

Until lately, the success of ISIS's African affiliates had led [some to conclude](#) that the continent was the global epicenter of the Islamic jihadist movement. Indeed, Africa's Sahel region has been a particular hotspot, afflicted by the presence of both ISIS and al-Qaeda elements.

But recent high-profile international attacks by Afghanistan-based ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) have raised its visibility markedly. ISIS-K claimed responsibility for the January bombings at a memorial for IRGC general Qassim Suleimani in Iran, which killed nearly 100 people. It also perpetrated the recent deadly shooting attacks in Moscow that killed over 130 people. And, in August 2021, ISIS-K launched a dramatic attack on the Kabul airport during the U.S. withdrawal, killing both civilians and American forces.

ISIS-K operatives have also reportedly been involved in other unsuccessful terror [plots](#) in Russia, Germany and Sweden; [France and Italy](#) have raised their security levels. It is clear that this group has objectives – and reach – beyond Afghanistan.

Will the Taliban provide a safe haven?

With the Taliban now the presiding government of Afghanistan, there is worry among policymakers and observers that the South Asian country will once again become a safe harbor for international jihadists, as it was before the 9/11 attacks.

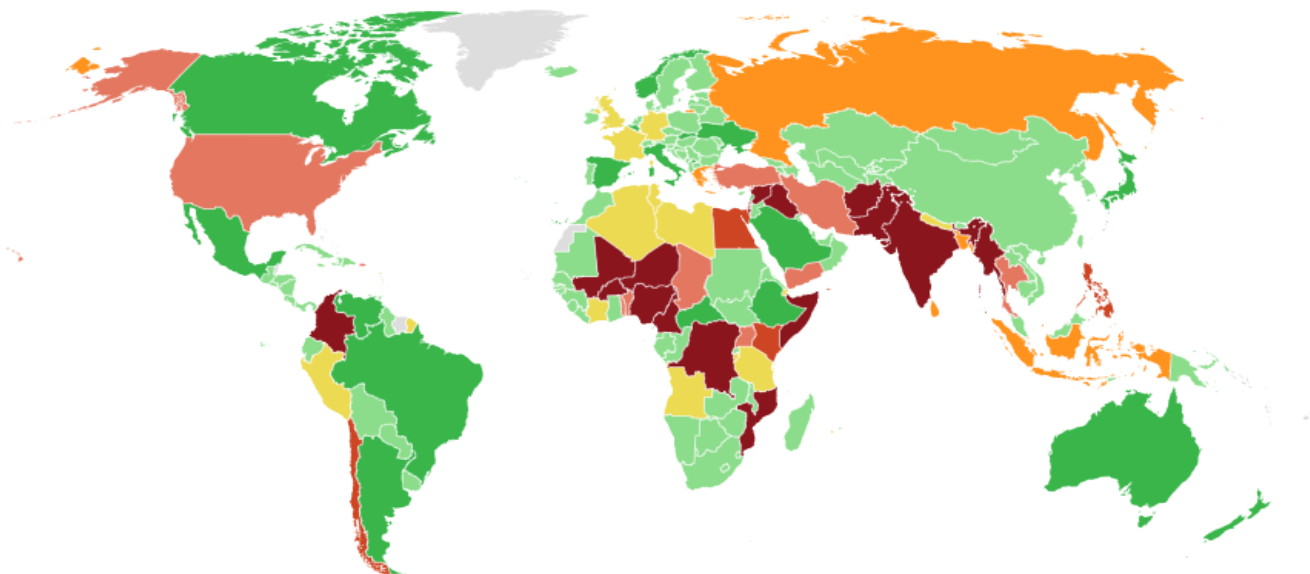
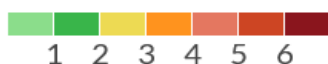
The fact that al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri was killed in Kabul in 2022 indicates ongoing Taliban ties to the terror group. [Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent](#) (AQIS) also operates out of Afghanistan to advance its agenda across South Asia, including against Pakistan and India.

The Taliban does not rule Afghanistan unopposed. ISIS-K is a major challenger for power, and the Taliban does not have the ability or capacity to end the insurgency. ISIS-K has undertaken several high-profile attacks inside Afghanistan, undermining confidence in Taliban governance and the group's ability to provide safety and security.

Meanwhile, Pakistan is one of the most terror-afflicted countries in the world, with nearly [1,500 fatalities](#) in 2023, and is home to at least 15 reported terrorist groups. The most powerful among them is the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an ally of both the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda that seeks to overthrow the (nuclear-armed) Pakistani government.



The map is interactive (click on picture)



Global deaths from terrorism last year increased by 22 percent, rising to 8,352, their highest level since 2017. The deadliest attack by far was the Hamas assault on Israel in October, followed by attacks in Niger, Syria, Pakistan, Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria – mostly perpetrated by groups linked to Islamic State or al-Qaeda. (Scores are a composite of four indicators of the impact of terrorism, with 0 representing the lowest impact.)

Source: Institute for Economics & Peace, Global Terrorism Index

The resilient al-Qaeda

Perhaps the most infamous name in modern terrorism, al-Qaeda is now seemingly a shadow of its 9/11 self. The death of its leader, Zawahiri, has left [al-Qaeda Core](#), the central part of the organization, without a high-profile helmsman to recruit, radicalize or propagandize.

That said, the group is resilient. There is little debate that it is still interested in reinvigorating itself to advance its Islamist agenda and to compete with Islamic State for funding, foot soldiers and fame. Although the global threat posed by al-Qaeda is not what it was in the early days after 9/11, it still maintains significant affiliates around the world to advance its Islamist, anti-Western goals and its dream of creating a caliphate.

Take East Africa's al-Shabaab, which the [U.S. State Department](#) calls "one of al-Qaeda's most dangerous affiliates," responsible for killing "thousands of people, including Americans, in Somalia and across East Africa." Besides its destabilizing of East Africa, U.S. policymakers are concerned about al-Shabaab sponsoring terror attacks on American soil. Other [al-Qaeda partners](#) can be found in the Middle East, South Asia, the Levant, the Maghreb, the Sahel and the Arabian Peninsula.

Scenarios

Less likely: The threat of terrorism decreases

It is conceivable that the grievances that terrorists say drive their hostility could be addressed at several levels, and that the use of terrorism as a tool to coerce government policies through violence against innocents will diminish.

Peace, based on political agreements between warring parties, could take hold in regions afflicted by terrorism and insurgencies, reducing the perceived need for the use of force against the government and the populace. A decreased appetite for the brutality of terrorism among the public in afflicted areas could also help starve terror groups of the supporters, soldiers, money and freedom needed to operate.

Persistent pressure from counterterror operations involving international cooperation, law enforcement, intelligence, military, financial and informational means would limit the opportunities for terror groups to survive and thrive. However, these means of reducing the threat of international terrorism are unlikely to



succeed – owing to current conflicts, ongoing political differences, the effectiveness of terrorism in highlighting causes and inflicting fear, and governmental capacity being overstretched by conflicts and great power competition.

More likely: The threat of terrorism increases

While global terrorist threats overall have arguably diminished in the public mind in recent years, terrorism is either aflame or smoldering in various parts of the world. With political and sectarian tensions elevated, especially in the Middle East, violent extremism could spread quickly, as evidenced by recent plots and attacks.

Iran will almost certainly continue to support its terrorist proxies to advance its anti-American, anti-Israeli, anti-Western agenda. While Tehran tries to maintain some degree of plausible deniability for its actions, its support of terror proxies is a double-edged sword that could bring unintended consequences. Some have called for direct Western attacks on Iran due to its support of militant groups like Hamas, the Houthis and Kata'ib Hezbollah. Such an approach could lead to a wider conflagration in the Middle East, with broader consequences for global economic and political stability.

Weak national governments and porous borders are also troubling, as they allow terror groups to find safe places to plan, train, operate and move easily between countries. As mentioned earlier, Afghanistan is an area of particular concern in this respect, following the withdrawal of the Western coalition forces that maintained pressure on terror groups, including those with international ambitions and reach.

Technological changes could also empower terror groups, especially in areas like drones. Small, inexpensive, armed [first-person-view drones](#) are having significant effects on the battlefield in Ukraine and beyond. Artificial intelligence, including the use of deepfakes, may be used for nefarious purposes – serving alongside social media as a force multiplier for extremists, for the purposes of radicalization, recruitment and retention.

With a [large number of elections](#) being held worldwide this year, including in the United States, India, Indonesia and across Europe, the chances of related terrorist violence are significant. More than 50 attacks took place during Pakistan's recent elections.

The summer Olympics will also be staged in Paris this year and could provide an opportunity for an attack at a crowded, high-visibility venue that would draw worldwide attention. Mass casualty strikes at symbolic sites are attractive to terror groups seeking global media attention to promote their extremist causes.

While the specific threats have changed over the last five years since the fall of ISIS's caliphate, the menace of international terrorism will remain with us and could worsen. Terrorist acts can be perpetrated with limited resources and minimal costs and yet achieve significant results. Unfortunately, violent extremists have recently demonstrated a continued desire and ability to project power internationally.

The success of recent attacks will only embolden and encourage terror groups. As such, for the short term, terror groups will likely continue to use violence to destabilize governments, interrupt peace efforts, highlight incendiary causes, recruit soldiers and supporters, and secure bases of operation.

Olympic Games award criteria

By the Editor-in-Chief

The assignment of the Olympic Games is made through a competitive bidding process governed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The IOC evaluates potential host cities based on a variety of criteria, including:

1. **Infrastructure and Facilities:** The ability of the city to provide adequate infrastructure, including sports venues, accommodations for athletes and visitors, transportation systems, and other essential facilities.
2. **Budget and Financial Plans:** The financial viability of hosting the Games, including the proposed budget, funding sources, and economic impact studies.
3. **Legacy and Sustainability:** The long-term impact of hosting the Games on the city and its residents, including plans for repurposing or reusing venues, promoting sustainability, and fostering social and economic development.
4. **Security:** The city's ability to provide a safe and secure environment for athletes, officials, and spectators during the Games.
5. **Experience and Expertise:** The host city's experience in organizing and hosting large-scale international events, as well as the expertise of its organizing committee.
6. **Government and Public Support:** The level of support from local, regional, and national governments, as well as public opinion within the host city and country.



7. **Geopolitical Considerations:** While not explicitly stated, geopolitical factors such as regional stability, diplomatic relations, and global events may also influence the selection process.

After evaluating these criteria, the IOC Executive Board makes recommendations to the full IOC session, which then votes to select the host city for a particular edition of the Olympic Games.

Regarding #5 it seems that Olympic authorities forget very easily:

1. **2001 Strasbourg Cathedral Bombing Attempt:** In December 2000, a plot to bomb Strasbourg Cathedral was foiled. The plot was attributed to Algerian militants.
2. **2002 Orly Airport Attack:** In March 2002, a French soldier was killed, and several others injured when a man opened fire at Orly Airport in Paris. The attacker was reportedly a Muslim extremist.
3. **2012 Toulouse and Montauban Shootings:** In March 2012, a series of shootings occurred in Toulouse and Montauban, resulting in the deaths of seven people, including three children and a rabbi. The attacker, Mohammed Merah, was affiliated with jihadist groups.
4. **2015 Charlie Hebdo Shooting:** In January 2015, two gunmen attacked the offices of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris, killing 12 people and injuring 11 others. The attackers claimed allegiance to Islamist extremist groups.
5. **2015 Paris Attacks:** In November 2015, a series of coordinated terrorist attacks occurred in Paris, targeting various locations including the Bataclan theater, restaurants, and the Stade de France. The attacks resulted in the deaths of 130 people and hundreds injured. The Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the attacks.
6. **2016 Nice Truck Attack:** In July 2016, a truck was deliberately driven into crowds celebrating Bastille Day in Nice, killing 86 people and injuring more than 400 others. The attacker, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, was associated with Islamist extremism.
7. **2018 Paris Knife Attack:** In May 2018, a knife attack in Paris left one person dead and several others injured. The attacker, Khamzat Azimov, was reportedly inspired by IS.

Of course, at the time of assignment, there was no proxy war in Ukraine nor a proxy/terrorist war in Gaza two situations that are expected to ignite terrorist responses against European (soft) targets. In addition, why does the Olympic Committee permit the Opening ceremony in river Seine just because is innovative ignoring the threat vulnerability accompanying this not-so-clever decision?

ISIS Has Implemented Their Rule of Terror: A Report from the Al-Hawl Camp in Syria

By Jonathan Spyer

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65753/isis-has-implemented-their-rule-of-terror>

Apr 04 – "What they were doing with ISIS, they're still doing. Killing, stealing, burning tents, and especially in the foreign families' section, which is the most dangerous and where no one can enter on foot," Sarah Derik tells me as we sit in her office at the Al-Hawl refugees camp in northern Syria.

It is a cold and rainy March day. Outside, the rain is battering the canvas of the expanse of tents that house the camp's inmates. Every so often, a woman in full black Islamic niqab dress can be seen making her way quickly from one tent to another.

Located close to Syria's border with Iraq, and today largely forgotten by the world, the camp offers harsh testimony to the continued vigor and strength of Sunni Islamism in general and the Islamic State idea in particular.

Derik is the director of security at the camp. Originally established to house Iraqi refugees from the first Gulf War, **Al-Hawl** is the main holding ground for the families of ISIS fighters captured in the course of the US-led coalition's war to destroy the [ISIS Caliphate](#) in the period 2014-19.

Describing Al-Hawl as a "camp" misses its dimensions. It is a tent city. Forty-three thousand people are held there, all living under canvas and behind barbed wire. Forty thousand of these are women and children, along with 3,000 men. The inmates are divided into six sections, according to nationality. The proportions reflect the IS membership. In Western coverage, the focus on foreign fighters sometimes led to the false impression that Islamic State was an external imposition in the Levant. This was never the case. The bulk of IS fighters were from Iraq and Syria. The movement belonged, and belongs, to the local reality in which political Islam remains without serious competition for the loyalty of the mass of Sunni Arabs.



In Al-Hawl's six sections, the Iraqi contingent is the largest and resides in areas 1-3. Areas 4 and 5 are where the Syrians are held. In section 6, regarded by the camp authorities as the most dangerous and inaccessible area of the camp, 6,480 family members of foreign ISIS fighters are residents.

"The ISIS system and way of ruling is implemented in the camp," says Jihan Hanan, a senior civilian administrator at Al-Hawl. "They are openly carrying weapons in the camp. In the last week, they attacked a tent of the International Red Cross. They cover their faces and just go out and attack... They say that Al-Hawl is one of their bases and an important part of their infrastructure."



Numerous Camp Inmates Killed by ISIS in Recent Years

One hundred and seventy inmates of the camp have been killed by ISIS in the period since 2019. The organization rules the camp population with the brutality for which it is renowned.

"The security at the camp is quite fragile," says Derik. "We control the surroundings, but we don't have any control in the camp, and we aren't getting any assistance to improve this."

The Hisba, the ISIS female police force, is organized in the camp and is probably responsible for many of the killings of inmates.

The organization maintains an "Islamic court" at Al-Hawl which issues judgments and punishments. Sleeper cells engaged in smuggling and coordinating escape attempts are active. Communication with the outside is seamless.

"The great majority of them have cellphones," Derik tells me. "Two factors help with the escapes. The sleeper cells make use of any unrest or chaos to organize breakouts. Also the Turkish airstrikes – whenever there are airstrikes, we see an increase in escapes and smuggling attempts. Ras al-Ain is only a few hours away and is occupied by the Turks and the SNA (Islamist fighters organized by Turkey). They can reach it on foot, and they also receive help from that area." Amid the reality of ISIS control in Al-Hawl, no efforts at deradicalization are taking place – and the



majority of children over the age of 12 do not attend the schools organized by UNICEF in the camp. Rather, they receive instruction from the ISIS structures.

Efforts at repatriation have picked up over the last 18 months, with the result that the camp population fell below 50,000 in mid 2023, for the first time since 2018. But progress remains slow and sporadic. The Autonomous Administration of North East Syria (AANES), the Kurdish-led governing structure that rules Syria east of the Euphrates, has no official contact with the Syrian regime, and so cannot repatriate Syrian citizens. Some Syrians have been reintegrated into communities east of the Euphrates. Iraq also has set a goal of repatriating 150 families per month.

Western governments, including the US, have made similar declarations of intent.

It is hard not to detect a certain cynicism behind the very slow progress in this area. The Autonomous Administration is not a state and, indeed, its authority is not officially recognized by any country. It cannot, therefore, make the kind of representations to foreign governments that could oblige them to quickly resume responsibility for their own citizens. So the security forces of the AANES, lacking resources and capacity, are landed with the job of looking after tens of thousands of radicalized people in their own largely ignored corner of Syria, and the problem is conveniently moved out of sight.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the situation at Al-Hawl is the presence of non-Muslim Iraqis and Syrians among the camp population, still held in conditions of enslavement by ISIS.

Islamic State, famously, attempted genocide against the [Yazidi people](#) of northern Syria and Iraq in 2014. In the framework of this, many thousands of Yazidi women were taken and held as slaves by the organization and the quasi-state it established at that time. Today, according to information issued by Yazidi House, an umbrella organization of Yazidi organizations in northern Syria, 2,800 Yazidi people remain missing and unaccounted for from that period.

An unknown number of these people are being held at Al-Hawl and similar camps. The families of ISIS fighters, supposedly themselves incarcerated, but in practice self-governing, are currently holding slaves captured during the period of the ISIS Caliphate. These Yazidi slaves are forced to give false information regarding themselves when registering with the camp authorities.

"One Yazidi woman we eventually located had identified herself as a Moroccan Islamic State volunteer – because she was forced to," Hanan says. "Since then, 16 Yazidis have been reunited with their families. And they told us that captives remain, but we don't have access to them."

"In Al-Hawl, ISIS made a film, saying to the Yazidis that 'If you go back to your home, your families will slaughter you because you became Muslims,'" Younes, an official of the Yazidi House, tells me. "Al-Hawl is considered an 'emirate' of ISIS, and they have a strong hold there. One of the women we liberated had been forbidden even to leave the tent when she was there."

Little is written today about Sunni Islamist and jihadi organizations in the [Middle East](#). The contest between Shia Iran with its proxies and Israel and other Western-aligned states is the central strategic process in the region.

But it would be a mistake to ignore the fact that political Islam remains without a serious competitor for support among the Sunni Arab populations across the Levant and Iraq. Their organizations may for now appear beaten and fragmented, but this can rapidly change. The Hamas attacks of October 7, after all, were first and foremost a manifestation of Sunni Islamism, regardless of that movement's other alignments. Many of the practices witnessed in that day's events were debuted by ISIS on the Ninawa Plains in the summer of 2014. It's best not to be surprised.

The Islamic State's time bomb, ticking quietly away amid the wind and rain of northern Syria, deserves closer attention.

[Jonathan Spyer](#) is director of research at the Middle East Forum and director of the Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis. He is author of [Days of the Fall: A Reporter's Journey in the Syria and Iraq Wars](#) (2018).

IS Growing Stronger in Syria

By [Jeff Seldin](#) | VOA national security reporter

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20240406-is-growing-stronger-in-syria>

Apr 06 – Slowly but surely, the Islamic State terror group seems to be regaining its footing in Syria, launching new and brazen attacks against forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Just-released data from U.S. Central Command, which oversees U.S. forces across the Middle East and South Asia, puts the number of Islamic State fighters in Syria and Iraq at about 2,500 — more than double estimates from late January.

And a series of new studies is adding to the concern.

The nonprofit Counter Extremism Project (CEP), in a report released earlier this week, counted at least 69 confirmed attacks by the Islamic State group, also known as IS, ISIS or Daesh, in central Syria last month.



The attacks resulted in the deaths of at least 84 Syrian soldiers and 44 civilians, and more than doubled the total number of confirmed IS operations for all of 2024.

“March was, by every metric, the most violent month of ISIS’s Badia [central Syrian desert] insurgency since late 2017, when the group first lost control of its territory,” according to the CEP report.

“The unique and alarming difference in March was the scale of attacks against security forces,” the report added. “ISIS cells successfully and consistently targeted regime outposts and ambushed patrols, frequently capturing and executing soldiers.”

And at a time when most of the world is focused on Islamic State’s Afghan affiliate, blamed for the deadly attack last month on a concert hall near Moscow, CEP is not alone in its warning about the group’s Syrian operatives.

A separate report this week published by the pro-Kurdish Rojava Information Center (RIC), found IS maintained a high tempo of attacks in parts of Syria nominally controlled by the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces or SDF.

RIC’s monthly sleeper cell report counted 27 Islamic State attacks in March, following 26 in February and 16 this past January.

The RIC report also noted a heavy focus by IS on targeting SDF troops and locations, including at least three attacks from March 7 through March 15.

The concerns about the upswing in IS attacks across Syria are not new.

Officials with the SDF’s political wing told VOA this past January that the terror group’s activities had “increased significantly,” both in areas patrolled by the SDF and in areas overseen by the Assad regime.

An intelligence assessment compiled by the United Nations and issued in January, based on information from member states, likewise warned IS was poised for a possible resurgence.

The U.N. report said Islamic State still likely had between 3,000 to 5,000 fighters across Syria and Iraq, adding that the central Syria desert had become “a logistics and operations hub with 500 to 600 fighters.”

Still, many U.S. officials have expressed skepticism about the nature of the rebirth of IS in Syria.

The terror group is “struggling in many ways to mount a major capability that is relevant to the United States,” said National Counterterrorism Center Director Christine Abizaid during an appearance this week on the In the Room podcast with terrorism analyst Peter Bergen.

And the Worldwide Threat Assessment, issued last month by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, cautioned that while IS remains a centralized global terror organization, “it has been forced to rely on regional branches in response to successive leadership losses during the past few years.”

Despite such differences, many counterterrorism officials and independent analysts agree Islamic State is still nowhere near reasserting itself in a way that resembles the terror group’s heyday six to eight years ago, when it controlled large swaths of Syria and Iraq.

Some caution, though, that even modest growth is reason for worry.

“The Islamic State always maintained capacity, even though it lost its control of Mosul and Raqqa and other strongholds,” said Bill Roggio, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

“It was never truly defeated ... because we never do enough to actually defeat them,” Roggio told VOA. “And in places like Syria, it’s extremely difficult because who do you work with, who do you partner with to do that?”

The U.S. partner in northeastern Syria is the Kurdish-led SDF, charged not only with conducting ongoing operations to counter IS but it has also been responsible for a series of prisons holding some 9,000 former IS fighters and for overseeing security at displaced persons camps, like al-Hol, which remain home to tens of thousands of IS wives and children.

Further complicating matters, the SDF has increasingly found itself in conflict with Turkish forces, who view it as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK, labeled as a terror organization by both Ankara and Washington. And some 900 mostly U.S. special forces in Syria have been distracted by recent drone and rocket attacks targeting U.S. bases by Iranian-backed militias.

Meanwhile, the U.S. and its SDF allies have little reach into parts of central Syria, where forces loyal to the Assad regime battle Islamic State cells with Russian support.

U.S. officials have long criticized those Syrian and Russian efforts as insufficient.

“The Russians really, in my estimation, are in the same mode as the U.S.,” Roggio said. “They’re doing enough to keep the Assad regime propped up and keep them alive and keep the pressure on the Islamic State. But they have bigger fish to fry in Ukraine.”

“They’re not devoting the resources and the energy to defeat the Islamic State in Syria,” he added.

And some former officials warn that any goodwill between Russia and the U.S. when it comes to battling the Islamic State has long since dried up.

“It’s [Russia’s] been consulted,” said Edmund Fitton-Brown, a former senior United Nations counterterrorism official who currently serves as a senior adviser for CEP. “And now we seem to have lost that.”



“That is a problem because some of the people who are best equipped to analyze and predict what might happen are not playing ball,” Fitton-Brown told VOA following last month’s IS attack in Russia.

The Kremlin is “capable of helping in this if they wanted to, but they don’t,” he said.

Experts and analysts warn these sorts of problems provide IS with fertile ground to grow its forces and its operations.

For now, though, those efforts still seem to be in the early stages.

“ISIS is not poised to capture major cities ... and likely will be unable to capture smaller strategic objectives,” the CEP report said.

“However, March’s attacks appear to show a pattern in which ISIS cells have seized control over much of the ‘empty’ space outside hardened regime positions.”

► Read also: [One Year of the Islamic State Worldwide Activity Map](#)

ISIS Jihadist Enter EU Nations With Ukrainian Passport; Global Terrorists Join War Against Russia: OPED



By Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury

Source: <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/isis-jihadist-enter-eu-nations-with-ukrainian-passport-global-terrorists-join-war-against-russia-oped/>

Apr 07 – There is an ongoing discussion about thousands of Islamic State (ISIS) fighters entering European Union (EU) nations using Ukrainian passports – sometimes even using non-Muslim names.

According to counterterrorism researchers – during the Syrian conflict, Ukraine has been used as a transit point for ISIS fighters who sought to move further into the European nations.

In Ukraine, these individuals receive treatment to improve their health and meet representatives of local terror cells. Additionally, they managed paper marriages with Ukrainian females, which enabled them to get citizenship in the country ultimately.

Once they received a Ukrainian passport, they almost immediately left Ukraine for any of the European countries – melted into the society, and silently continued jihadist activities by maintaining regular communication with the Islamic State (ISIS) network.

On July 27, 2015, the European Parliament, in response to a question about the presence of ISIS combatants in areas disputed by Ukraine and Russia, was told: *On July 7, 2015, the New York Times reported the presence of a Chechen volunteer force made up of Islamic State (ISIS) sympathizers in territories disputed by Russia and Ukraine.*

It appears that they have openly sided with Ukraine in a bid to weaken Russia and compel it to concentrate its forces on that country, drawing resources away from other fronts on which it is pitted against various Islamic terrorist groups.

To date, the Ukrainian authorities have made no attempt to deny the reports and have neither disowned these fundamentalist ISIS combatants nor sought to remove them from the territory Ukraine has been claiming is its own.

Given the serious danger posed by ISIS and Islamic terrorism in general, as confirmed recently by the tragic attacks in France and Tunisia, does the Vice-President/High Representative not consider it appropriate to rethink her stance regarding the conflict between Ukraine and Russia and engage in closer dialogue with Russia with a view to containing this fundamentalist threat?

In 2022, Russian news outlet Sputnik Arabic, in a report, claimed that dozens of extremist fighters had made their way from Syria’s northern Idlib governorate to Ukraine to fight against Russian troops.

According to the report, at least 87 former members of ISIS were allegedly transferred to the Syrian-Turkish border on March 26, 2022, under the direct supervision of the leader of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) armed group, Abu Mohammad al-Julani. The report indicated that most of the fighters are of Iraqi, Chechen, Tunisian, and French nationalities.

On March 8, 2022, 450 HTS militants arrived in Ukraine to join the fight against the Russian army.

According to the family members of the militants, high-ranking HTS leaders have been coordinating with senior leaders of the Turkistan Islamic Party group, Ansar al-Tawhid, and Hurras al-Din groups to facilitate the passage of the extremists from Idlib to Turkey and then on to Ukraine.





they uncovered, saying: "At the end of 2021, the US released from prison – several dozen Daesh (ISIS) terrorists, including citizens of CIS countries. These individuals were sent to the US-controlled Al-Tanf base, where they underwent special training in subversive and terrorist warfare methods with a focus on the Donbas region".

Foreign mercenaries from around the world have joined in on the side of Ukraine as President Volodymyr Zelensky [pleaded](#) for global assistance in the wake of the Kremlin's special military operation.

Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine on 24 February after responding to the call for assistance by the newly-recognized republics of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Despite recognition of their independence by Russia, Ukrainian armed forces continued to shell civilian targets and breach the borders of the two republics, prompting the leaders of the republics to formally ask Russia for military assistance.

Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury is an internationally acclaimed multi-award-winning journalist, writer, research scholar, counterterrorism specialist, and Editor of Blitz, a newspaper published in Bangladesh since 2003.



The Islamic State is calling for attacks on the quarter-final stadiums of the Champions League.

The relevant post was made by Al-Azaim and Sarh al-Khilafah which reproduced the messages of ISIS. The photo beyond the phrase "Kill them all" shows a fighter with a gun, with Arsenal's Emirates playing host to Bayern, Paris Saint-Germain's Parc des Princes hosting Barcelona, the Wanda "Metropolitano" of Atlético which will face Dortmund and "Santiago Bernabeu" of Real Madrid which will host Manchester City.



Future Trends In Terrorism And Countermeasures – OpEd

By Dr. Sahibzada Muhammad Usman

Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/08042024-future-trends-in-terrorism-and-countermeasures-oped/>

Apr 07 – The landscape of terrorism and the strategies to counter it in Pakistan are constantly evolving. This dynamic interplay between terrorist organizations and counterterrorism forces is shaped by a myriad of factors, including geopolitical shifts, technological advancements, and the socio-economic context of the region. It is vital to examine into the future trends in terrorism and countermeasures in Pakistan, offering insights into the challenges and strategies that could define the coming years.

The digital era has transformed the way terrorist organizations operate, with an increasing trend towards using the internet for radicalization, recruitment, and planning attacks. Social media platforms, encrypted messaging apps, and the dark web have become tools for spreading extremist ideologies. Future trends may include more sophisticated cyber-attacks targeting critical infrastructure, financial systems, and government networks, necessitating a shift in counterterrorism strategies.

Terrorist groups are constantly innovating their tactics to bypass security measures. The use of drones for surveillance and attacks, for example, presents a new challenge. Additionally, there's a growing concern over the potential use of biological weapons, as they can cause widespread panic and have a significant impact with relatively little investment.

Inspired by extremist propaganda, individuals or small cells may carry out attacks without direct orders from a larger terrorist organization. These lone-wolf attacks are unpredictable and difficult to prevent, as they often lack the communication trails that intelligence agencies rely on to thwart plots.

To combat the rise of cyberterrorism and digital radicalization, Pakistan must invest in advanced cybersecurity measures and digital intelligence gathering. This includes developing the capability to monitor and analyze online activities related to terrorism, enhancing cooperation with international cyber intelligence communities, and implementing stricter regulations for online content.

Effective counterterrorism strategies must address the root causes of radicalization. Engaging communities, especially in vulnerable areas, through education, economic opportunities, and inclusive governance can reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies. Counter-radicalization programs that focus on de-radicalization and rehabilitation of former terrorists also play a crucial role.

Terrorism is a global threat that requires a coordinated international response. Pakistan needs to strengthen its cooperation with neighboring countries and international organizations to share intelligence, enhance border security, and tackle the financing of terrorism. Joint training exercises and shared strategies can improve the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI), drones, and other advanced technologies can significantly enhance surveillance and defense capabilities. AI, for example, can analyze vast amounts of data to predict potential terrorist threats. Drones can be used for aerial surveillance and in some cases, to neutralize threats. Investing in these technologies will be crucial for staying ahead of terrorists' evolving tactics.

To address the changing nature of terrorism, Pakistan must continuously update its legislative and policy frameworks. This includes enacting laws that address new forms of terrorism, such as cyber-attacks, and ensuring that human rights are respected in the process of counterterrorism. Transparency and accountability in counterterrorism operations can help build public trust and cooperation.

The path toward effective counterterrorism is fraught with challenges. Balancing security measures with civil liberties is a delicate task. There's also the risk of sectarian or ethnic profiling, which can alienate communities and potentially fuel further radicalization. Moreover, the geopolitical landscape of South Asia, with its complex web of alliances and conflicts, adds another layer of complexity to counterterrorism efforts in Pakistan.

The future of terrorism and counterterrorism in Pakistan is shaped by both local dynamics and global trends. As terrorist organizations evolve, adopting new technologies and tactics, counterterrorism strategies must also adapt. This requires not only investments in technology and intelligence but also a comprehensive approach that addresses the socio-economic factors contributing to radicalization. Through a combination of strengthened international cooperation, community engagement, and policy reforms, Pakistan can aim to mitigate the threats posed by terrorism in the years to come.

The road ahead is challenging, but with a concerted effort, it is possible to envision a future where the threat of terrorism is significantly reduced.

Dr. Sahibzada Muhammad Usman is a Research Scholar and Academic; with a Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of Pisa, Italy. Dr. Usman has participated in various national and international conferences and published 30 research articles in international journals.



Iran, Hamas and Western hypocrisy

By Prince Michael of Liechtenstein | Founder of GIS

Source: <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/gaza-west-hypocrisy/>



The West has been ignoring the dangers that Iran presents. The suffering now in Gaza is one of the consequences. © GIS – This cartoon is available for sale in [our shop](#).

Apr 08 – An airstrike targeted an Iranian consulate in Damascus early last week, killing seven military officers, including two generals serving in Iran's [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#).

The Revolutionary Guards, an elite military entity crucial for the Iranian regime's hold on power, ruthlessly suppress any opposition within the country and support terrorist activities abroad. The airstrike was a necessary anti-terrorist measure likely carried out by the Israeli Defense Forces, yet it faced criticism from several European capitals.

Iran stands as the foremost state sponsor of [terrorism](#), providing [billions](#) of dollars in financial, logistical and intelligence support to murderous organizations like [Hamas](#) and [Hezbollah](#). These groups in turn, perpetrate violence and destabilize the region. Additionally, the Iranian regime openly advocates for the [ethnic cleansing](#) and [genocide](#) of the Jewish population in Israel.

The [Abraham Accords](#), signed in 2020, fostered diplomatic ties between Arab nations and Israel and could have eventually led to peaceful solutions in the Middle East. As such, they were a blow to the Iranian regime, and had the potential to eliminate the *raison d'être* for groups like Hamas. The terror group therefore orchestrated the [horrific massacre](#) on October 7, killing approximately 1,200 Jewish civilians, including infants, and abducting over 200 hostages.

Hamas's propaganda win

The objective was to provoke an Israeli retaliation that would maximize Palestinian casualties, thwarting rapprochement efforts and securing Hamas a propaganda victory. Hamas utilized a network of tunnels and civilian infrastructure in Gaza (including schools, hospitals and residences) to launch attacks, exploiting the local population as human shields.

This strategy has tragically succeeded. Israel has been forced to defend itself with a military incursion into Gaza. Despite efforts to target militants selectively, collateral damage continues to occur.



Unfortunately, the resultant tsunami of anti-Israel propaganda has borne fruit. We see the dying Palestinians, destroyed hospitals and hungry children. Casualty figures released by Hamas-controlled Gazan authorities are taken at face value. The effects on Palestinian civilians are terrible, but taken out of context, these messages obscure Hamas's and Tehran's responsibility for the conflict.

Bewildering Western policies

The puzzling question is why the media and politicians in Europe and the U.S. have been so lenient toward Iran and its terrorist proxies. Iran has one of the most oppressive political systems in the world. Its leaders, supported by the Revolutionary Guards, do not tolerate any deviation from their rules. In 2023 alone, more than 800 people were executed in Iran. At least [1,100 political prisoners](#) are currently rotting away in Iranian prisons, where they are likely being tortured.

Despite Iran's egregious human rights abuses and sponsorship of terrorism, in 2015 the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) as well as Germany, concluded the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action](#) (JCPOA) with Iran. The deal put restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities, and in return lifted sanctions on the regime – without any requirement that it stop its terrorist activities.

For this reason, in 2017 the administration of then U.S. President Donald Trump reinstated sanctions and withdrew from the JCPOA. It immediately faced pushback from the European Union, which incomprehensibly threatened European firms with heavy fines if they followed the U.S. sanctions and discontinued business with Iran. When President Joe Biden took over the White House in 2021, his administration's [initial interest in reviving](#) the JCPOA was similarly perplexing. Furthermore, with their direct payments to the authorities in Gaza, many European countries have been subsidizing Hamas for years.

With their leniency toward Iran and Hamas, the U.S., and even more so European countries, shoulder a large part of the blame for Gazans' current plight.

Nevertheless, Western powers are pressuring Israel to accept a cease-fire with Hamas. Effective propaganda and media naivety (or perhaps even complicity?) have drummed up enough anti-Israel sentiment in the West that this short-sighted solution has significant support. Populist politicians have pounced and joined the call for a cease-fire.

While on the surface such appeals may seem humanitarian, they are in fact deeply hypocritical. A cease-fire will only allow Hamas to regroup, rearm, continue to oppress Palestinians in Gaza, and organize new terror attacks.

The success of this deadly propaganda means the evil of Hamas will not be [eradicated](#). Western hypocrisy allows the terrorism to continue. The losers are primarily the Palestinians, as well as Israel, but also the free, democratic world.



By Seth G. Jones, Daniel Byman, Alexander Palmer, and Riley McCabe

MARCH 2024

Although the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza has captured the world's attention, there is a serious risk of war between Israel and Hezbollah, according to a new assessment by CSIS. Since October 7, 2023, there have been over 4,400 rocket, missile, and other stand-off attacks by Israel and Hezbollah combined. Hezbollah has also repeatedly violated UN Security Council Resolution 1701 by deploying forces and firing anti-tank guided missiles and other stand-off weapons against Israel from the zone between the Blue Line and the Litani River, according to CSIS geolocation



analysis. The United States needs to increase its diplomatic engagement to prevent what could become a much wider and more violent war in the Middle East.

Table 1: Hezbollah's Rocket and Missile Arsenal

Category	Model	Range	Diameter	Warheads	Arsenal
Short-Range Unguided Rockets	"Katyusha"	4-40 km	107-122 mm	6-20 kg high explosive (HE) or submunitions	40,000-80,000
	Fajr-1 and Type 63 derivatives	8-10 km	107 mm	8 kg HE fragmentation	
	Burkan	10 km	—	100-500 kg HE	
	Falaq-1	10-11 km	240 mm	50 kg HE	
	Falaq-2	10-11 km	333 mm	120 kg HE	
	Shahin-1	13 km	333 mm	190 kg HE	
Long-Range Unguided Rockets	Type 81	20.5 km	122 mm	39 submunitions	60,000-80,000
	Fajr-3	43 km	240 mm	45 kg HE	
	Fajr-5	75 km	333 mm	90 kg HE	
	Raad-2/Raad-3 Uragan-type	60-70 km	220 mm	50 kg HE	
Short-Range Unguided Ballistic Missiles	Khaibar-1	100 km	302 mm	150 kg HE	20,000-40,000
	Zelzal-1	125-160 km	610 mm	600 kg HE	
	Zelzal-2	210 km	610 mm	600 kg HE	
Intermediate-Range Unguided Ballistic Missiles	Fateh-110/M-600	250-300 km	610 mm	450-500 kg HE	10-50
	Scud-B/C/D	300-500 km	880 mm	600-985 kg HE	
Short-Range Guided Ballistic Missiles	Fateh-110/M-600	250-300 km	610 mm	450-500 kg HE	150-400
Total					120,000-200,000

Seth G. Jones is senior vice president, director of the International Security Program at CSIS, and author most recently of *Three Dangerous Men: Russia, China, Iran, and the Rise of Irregular Warfare* (W.W. Norton).

Daniel Byman is a senior fellow at CSIS, professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, and author most recently of *Spreading Hate: The Global Rise of White Supremacist Terrorism* (Oxford).

Alexander Palmer is an associate fellow in the Transnational Threats Project at CSIS. Riley McCabe is a program manager and research associate at the Transnational Threats Project at CSIS.

Defining Jihadism

By Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/65775/defining-jihadism>

Apr 11 – Recently, the Daily Wire [revealed](#) that an internal [newsletter](#) from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence featured an article arguing for "changing terminology related to counterterrorism," because "certain phrases to identify international terrorism... are hurtful to Muslim-Americans." One of the supposedly "problematic phrases" is the term "jihadist." An alternative suggestion given in the newsletter to denote jihadists is the word *khawarij*.¹

If one wanted to find stereotypical "woke" discourse and political correctness, one would be hard pressed to find a better example than this. Unfortunately, the suggested change in terminology only creates *more* obstacles to an accurate understanding of contemporary terrorism and insurgent activity associated with the Islamic State (ISIS) and al-Qa'ida.

For a start, the term *khawarij* (which can be translated in the broadest sense as "outsiders") is not immediately understandable to broader audiences or those without knowledge of historical and present-day usage of the term in Arabic-language and Islamic discourse. In this regard, the use of the term recalls the British government's official adoption of the derisive Arabic acronym "Da'esh" (standing for "the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham") to refer to the Islamic State -- an acronym that is by now familiar to Arabic-speakers but is meaningless to most English-speakers.



Within Islamic discourse today, the term *khawarij* is often thrown at those who are deemed too extreme in their beliefs. It may be as an insult, for example, against the Islamic State by al-Qa'ida, or from other Sunni Muslims against the Islamic State and al-Qa'ida. Even the Islamic State uses the term *khawarij* to describe groups it deems too extreme: most notably, the faction dubbed [Jama'at Ahl al-Sunna lil-Da'wa wa al-Jihad](#), which broke off from the Islamic State in the West Africa region and continues to fight against the Islamic State.

The historical and present-day baggage of the term *khawarij* means that using the term in an attempt to delegitimise groups such as al-Qa'ida and Islamic State is unlikely to prove fruitful. Worse, it impedes proper understanding among the general public regarding the beliefs of these groups and makes it seem as though non-Muslim governments have the authority to arbitrate on what constitutes the proper "middle" path of Islam and who are the supposed deviants going too far in their beliefs.

However, this discussion does raise the issue of definitions of jihadism and its associated term jihadist.²

It is also not helpful to apply the terms jihadism and jihadist to any use of the term jihad by Muslims. Some Muslims do insist that "greater jihad" should be defined as some personal or spiritual struggle, far removed from the idea of taking up arms. Others speak of jihad ("lesser jihad") in the sense of an armed struggle.

One of the most useful ways of looking at this issue might be through the lens of "extremism" as [developed by JM Berger](#), utilising social identity theory. People often define themselves in terms of in-groups (such as a religious community) and corresponding out-groups (such as individuals and groups who do not share the religious identity of the in-group). In-groups and their corresponding out-groups may simply co-exist or perhaps compete to win adherents while not necessarily being hostile to each other. For Berger, "extremism" is when an in-group sees its survival and success as unable to be separated from hostility to an out-group — ranging from defamation to discrimination, to genocide at the worst.

For groups conventionally seen as jihadist, there is an eternal conflict between believers/Muslims (in-group) and disbelievers/non-Muslims (out-group). It is a conflict that is religious in nature. The Muslim *ummah* is portrayed as facing an immediate crisis: supposed degradation, humiliation and subjugation at the hands of the disbelievers. The solution to this immediate crisis is to wage jihad (violent hostile action) to expel the non-Muslim "invaders" or "apostate" entities, such as those that have supposedly abandoned Islam because they do not implement Islamic law in its totality and supposedly collaborate with the non-Muslims.

Ultimately, however, there is the broader "crisis" of the existence of disbelievers and their exercise of any sovereignty or power on any part of the Earth. Thus, the jihad continues against them until they convert to Islam, are subjugated as second-class *dhimmi*s (an option for Jews, Christians and certain other non-Muslims) or are killed.

Islamic State, for instance, in Issue 15 of its English-language magazine, *Dabiq*, (published in 2016) carried an article addressed to the West, "[Why We Hate You and Fight You](#)." The foremost reason, in the words of the article, is "because you are disbelievers," and then elaborating: "Just as your disbelief is the primary reason we hate you, your disbelief is the primary reason we fight you, as we have been commanded to fight the disbelievers until they submit to the authority of Islam, either by becoming Muslims, or by paying jizyah – for those afforded this option – and living in humiliation under the rule of the Muslims."

The article then mentions grievances of "crimes against Muslims" such as bombing raids that "kill, and maim our people around the world," the West's "puppets in the usurped lands of the Muslims [that] oppress, torture, and wage war against anyone who calls to the truth," and the invasion of Muslim lands. Expelling the Western presence from Muslim lands and deposing their "puppets" may be the more immediate objectives, but they are derivative of the broader crisis of the existence of disbelievers and the impediment they present to the ability of Islamic State to exercise its sovereignty anywhere on Earth. The same basic worldview is articulated by al-Qa'ida. An interview, entitled "[Questions and Answers Regarding al-Aqsa Flood and its Repercussions](#)," from October 2023, shows differences between al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State. Most notably, whereas al-Qa'ida was effusive in its praise for the Hamas-led "al-Aqsa Flood" attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, the Islamic State could not bring itself to praise the operation because, unlike al-Qa'ida, it considers Hamas in all its forms to be an "apostate" movement for reasons such as its alliance with Iran and failure to implement Islamic law in its entirety. Nonetheless, the same basic jihadist worldview came through when the late leader of Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Khaled Batarfi, was asked about how he viewed the reactions of rulers of Muslim lands to Israel's military campaign in Gaza, as well as his message to the broader Muslim masses. For Batarfi, those rulers' policies apparently indicated the hollowness of their words of condemnation against Israel's actions: he asked for God to grant Muslims a "caliphate" to replace these rulers. Batarfi subsequently explained that the conflict with "the Jews and Crusaders" is a "religious battle."

No one, he continued, should be deceived "that we fight the Jews only because they are occupying the Muslims' land or [we fight the Americans] only because the Americans occupy the Muslims' land and wield power over us." Rather, the other crucial reason is that "they have disbelieved in God Almighty." He elaborated:

"For the Prophet (SAWS), when he came and was sent, said: 'I was sent with the sword before the hour, so that God Alone should be worshipped with no partner besides Him... I have been commanded to fight the people until they testify that there is no deity but God and that I am the Messenger of God, and perform



prayer and give zakat. If they do that, they have secured sacrosanctity of their blood and wealth from me....' "These hadiths show that we are fighting them as part of a religious war, fighting whereby they either convert to Islam, pay the jizya by hand while they feel subdued, so we fight them so that religion should belong entirely to God. This is at the time in which we repel them from our land and repel them from our holy sites. Then we fight them as part of offensive fighting and jihad. As for today, our jihad against these people is defensive jihad. We repel them from our religion, our holy sites, our land and resources. Today, oh Muslims, all the Ummah is occupied. It is all controlled by the enemies: either the external enemies who attack us in our abodes, or via the internal enemies who are these rulers who replace the law of God and those loyal to the disbelievers and those who wage war on the Muslims. Oh servants of God, look and see how they fight and wage a religious war against us." Thus, while serious disagreements arise between jihadist groups to the point that they often fight each other in interminable, internecine warfare, the basic worldview remains the same. It is possible to define jihadism concisely as follows: "Jihadism is a worldview in which the survival and success of Muslims can never be separated from waging armed jihad against disbelievers of various kinds. The solution to the broader crisis posed by disbelief entails continuous jihad that should first reunite Muslim lands under one caliphate and then seek to conquer the entire world for Islam." The definition does not purport to say whether this worldview constitutes the correct interpretation of Islam. Rather, it only notes the necessary centrality of armed jihad to that worldview.

Additionally, defining jihadism in this way also leads to a better appreciation of distinctions between Islamic groups. One corollary of the definition is jihadism's hostility to the current global system of nation-states.

There is no need, therefore, to abandon the terms jihadism and jihadist out of political correctness or fear of offending Muslims. When appropriately defined, those terms are helpful in grasping the terrorist and insurgent threats and challenges posed by al-Qa'ida, the Islamic State and similar groups -- far more so than *khawarij*, a term that does not have immediately clear meaning for wider audiences, is historically inaccurate, and sounds like a sneaky effort to cloud a very real threat.

Notes

[1] Those described as the first *khawarij* in Islamic sources are recorded as having opposed the rule of Ali bin Abi Talib, who served as the fourth successor (caliph) to rule over the Muslim community after the death of Islam's founder, Muhammad. In fact, like other Sunni Muslims, al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State *accept* Ali as one of the "rightly-guided" caliphs who represented the ideal system of governance they seek to create: that is, the theocratic polity of the caliphate that unites the global Muslim community.

Also, a number of specific beliefs are ascribed to historical groups deemed *Khawarij* such as declaring other Muslims to be non-Muslims on the mere basis of committing grave sins like fornication and drinking alcohol. These beliefs are rejected by al-Qa'ida and the [Islamic State](#).

[2] On the broadest level, while the term jihad is most readily associated with Islam, it also occurs in Arabic-language Christian discourse in a positive sense to denote a spiritual struggle and willingness to suffer persecution and die for one's faith.

For example, a liturgy book of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church (an autonomous church within the Catholic Church, based mainly in the Levant region and using Greek and Arabic as its liturgical languages) uses the term jihad to describe the death of Isidore of Chios, commemorated by the church as a martyr who died during the Roman persecution of Christians in the third century. [As recorded in the liturgy book:](#)

"Your martyr, oh Lord: by his jihad he obtained the crown of eternity, from you, oh our God. For he obtained Your power, and thus vanquished the persecutors, and destroyed the feeble tyranny of the devils. So by his supplications, oh Christ our God, save our souls." This sort of language is similar to the imagery that can be found in Latin Christian [writings](#) about martyrdom.

[Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi](#) is an Arabic translator and editor at Castlereagh Associates, a Middle East-focused consultancy, and a Ginsburg/Milstein Writing Fellow at the Middle East Forum. He runs an independent newsletter at [aymennaltamimi.substack.com](#).

The Islamic State Never Went Away

By Colin P. Clarke

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/04/10/islamic-state-is-k-isis-moscow-concert-attack/>

Apr 10 – With the recent Moscow concert venue [attack](#) that killed more than 140 people, the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) surprised many who may have believed that the Islamic State, also known as ISIS, was a problem of the past.

In fact, the Islamic State never went anywhere. According to the [Global Terrorism Index](#), an annual publication from the Institute for Economics & Peace that attempts to measure the impact of terrorism worldwide, the Islamic State "remained the deadliest terrorist group globally for the ninth consecutive year,



recording both the highest number of attacks and deaths from terrorism.” Islamic State attacks earlier this year, in [Iran](#) and [Turkey](#), underscore this dynamic.



At its peak, the Islamic State controlled territory in the Middle East that was equal to approximately half the [size of Great Britain](#). It attracted tens of thousands of [foreign fighters](#) from dozens of countries worldwide. Its fighters [beheaded](#) Westerners, [burned](#) a captured Jordanian pilot alive, and sought nefarious means of murdering its captives, including drowning and crucifixion. These crimes against humanity were recorded and ISIS broadcast these snuff films as propaganda to terrify civilians and recruit bloodthirsty extremists into its ranks. The group even [held](#) slave auctions where Yazidi women were purchased.

Over the span of a few years, ISIS either directed or inspired numerous high-profile attacks throughout Europe, including the Bataclan in Paris (2015), the Brussels Metro attack (2016), Nice (2016), Berlin (2016), Stockholm (2017), Istanbul (2017), and Barcelona (2017), to name just a few. There were also attacks throughout the globe, from New York City to Tunis.

At the time, it seemed that the Islamic State was ubiquitous, but an aggressive U.S.-led counterterrorism campaign referred to as the [Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS](#) helped usurp the organization's control of large swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria—particularly the group's strongholds in Mosul and Raqqa, respectively. Efforts included a sustained airpower campaign to bomb ISIS command-and-control nodes, as well as intensive ground operations featuring a combination of U.S. special operations forces, Kurdish militias, and even Iraqi Shiite militia groups known as Hashd al-Shaabi. In late March 2019, just over five years ago, the [Syrian town of Baghouz](#) fell to the Syrian Democratic Forces, bringing an end to the group's territorial caliphate. To this day, the United States has approximately 900 troops in Syria and another 2,500 in Iraq, forming a bulwark against an ISIS comeback in these countries. And when Baghouz fell, there was widespread optimism that the scourge of the Islamic State could be defeated once and for all.

But the Islamic State was well prepared for this inevitability. Even the group's former longtime leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, anticipated the revocation of the territory tied to the caliphate and [implored](#) ISIS sympathizers that “the scale of victory or defeat ... is not tied to a city or village.” “The land of God is wide,” he continued, “and the tides of war change.”

Part of the Islamic State's strategy was to expand globally, developing a worldwide network of franchise groups, affiliates, and branches that could carry out its mission in different regions. Over several years beginning in 2014, ISIS formally recognized *wilayats*, or provinces, in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, Afghanistan



(Khorasan), Libya, Bangladesh, the Philippines, West Africa, the Sahel, and Central Africa (Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of the Congo). This campaign succeeded. After its rise and fall in the heart of the Middle East, the Islamic State's center of gravity has shifted to parts of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In 2023, among the top 10 countries impacted by terrorism were: Burkina Faso (1), Mali (3), Pakistan (4), Afghanistan (6), Somalia (7), Nigeria (8), and Niger (10). In sub-Saharan Africa, the Islamic State Sahel Province (formerly known as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, or ISGS) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) control [large swaths of territory](#) that stretch from the outskirts of coastal West Africa all the way to the Lake Chad Basin.

Now that the Islamic State is perceived as more of an African and South Asian problem, countering the group has dropped significantly on the international community's agenda. In the West, particularly in the United States, the national security establishment is focused instead on the rise of China, the war in Ukraine, fallout from the Israel-Hamas war, and the proliferation of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence.

When global terrorism appears to fade, it is typically in response to counterterrorism pressure.

But terrorism is a tactic. It never actually goes away, and it endures because it is versatile—an asymmetric tool of non-state actors, or the preferred response of states sponsoring proxy groups.

When it flares again, it is often in response to changing geopolitical dynamics. Both sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, for instance, are plagued by similar ills: porous borders, weak security services, and populations rife with socioeconomic grievances that terrorist groups can take advantage of for recruitment purposes, especially in countries with large numbers of military-aged males.

In Afghanistan, since the August 2021 takeover by the Taliban, IS-K has been able to reconstitute its external operations planning network. A particularly interesting dynamic is that the Taliban have been able to [limit](#) IS-K's ability to act within Afghanistan, so in response, Islamic State militants have dedicated their resources to planning attacks abroad—within the region, but also farther afield, including in Europe. As of April 2024, the Islamic State's Afghan branch seems to have reassembled its external operations capability, and the organization's regional affiliates have managed to capitalize on the [groundswell of anger](#) in many Muslim communities resulting from the war in Gaza and the deaths of tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians, many of them women and children.

The increased operational tempo of IS-K and the frequency of plots and attacks suggest the group is broadening its targeting aperture. Its latest attack in Moscow, in particular, could have been predicted. For years, IS-K has [raged against Moscow](#) in its propaganda, painting Russian President Vladimir Putin as a stooge of the Shiite, citing the Kremlin's relationship with Iran, Russia propping up Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group [operating](#) alongside Lebanese Hezbollah in Syria. Now it is [determined to strike](#) European soil. Plots have been recently foiled in Germany, while President Emmanuel Macron [revealed in late March](#) that French intelligence had foiled several IS-K plots on France. Speaking recently about the nature of the threat, retired U.S. Gen. Frank McKenzie [said](#): "I think we should expect further attempts of this nature against the United States as well as our partners and other nations abroad."

So far, the operatives IS-K has relied on in its failed European plots [have been inexperienced](#). Some plots are prevented through counterterrorism expertise, others through terrorists' ineptitude and occasional amateurism. But the Islamic State is a learning organization. Its leadership will study points of failure and seek to innovate, improving its tactics, techniques, and procedures for its next flurry of attempts.

We should therefore be asking our leaders, policymakers, and elected officials what the strategy is to mitigate a relentless threat from a determined foe. Part of this strategy must be to prevent Western counterterrorism efforts from atrophying further. For two decades, counterterrorism formed the cornerstone of efforts to decimate groups such as al Qaeda and ISIS. The United States and its allies around the world formed intelligence-sharing partnerships and cooperated by disseminating important information about terrorist suspects, groups, tactics, and ideologies motivating violence.

Dealing with a rising China and a revanchist Russia is crucial, but doing so while leaving the counterterrorism cupboard bare makes little sense. After all, strategic competition and counterterrorism are not mutually exclusive; they're complementary. The relationships that Washington developed through two decades of counterterrorism operations with its Western partners can help facilitate the type of intelligence that also proves useful for dealing with "great powers."

Another important pillar of a robust global counterterrorism strategy is physically being close enough to some of the world's terrorism hot spots to respond in a timely manner. In the Sahel, the United States maintains a minimal presence yet is reportedly considering establishing a [drone base in Ghana](#) and other coastal locations to prevent the tide of jihadist terrorism from fully engulfing littoral West Africa. Following a [French withdrawal](#) and U.S. drawdown in the region, the power vacuum has been filled by Russia's [Africa Corps](#); the [Wagner Group](#) that preceded it was known for [making the jihadist problem worse](#), not better.

Many of the partnerships, lessons learned, and best practices from the global war on terror should not be jettisoned simply because the focus of ISIS and its affiliates is currently elsewhere. Western security services and intelligence agencies need to remain vigilant, but even more important, there needs to be a consistent and steady stream of resources—money, manpower, and counterterrorism tools—dedicated to



the fight. Only a comprehensive approach to counterterrorism—a combination of hard and soft power—can help reduce the pool of extremists that serve as ready foot soldiers for groups like the Islamic State and its network of global affiliates.

Colin P. Clarke is the director of research at The Soufan Group and a senior research fellow at The Soufan Center.

Sydney knife attacker shot dead after killing 6 in Bondi mall

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/hundreds-evacuated-sydney-mall-after-suspected-stabbing-media-reports-say-2024-04-13/>

Apr 13 – An attacker who fatally knifed six people in a Sydney mall was shot dead by police in the beachside

suburb of Bondi on Saturday, police said, as hundreds fled the scene. The assailant was shot by a police officer after he attacked shoppers in the busy Westfield Bondi Junction shopping centre, a police statement said.

Five of the six victims killed were women, while eight people, including a nine-month-old baby, were taken to hospital with stab wounds, New South Wales Police Commissioner Karen Webb told a press conference.

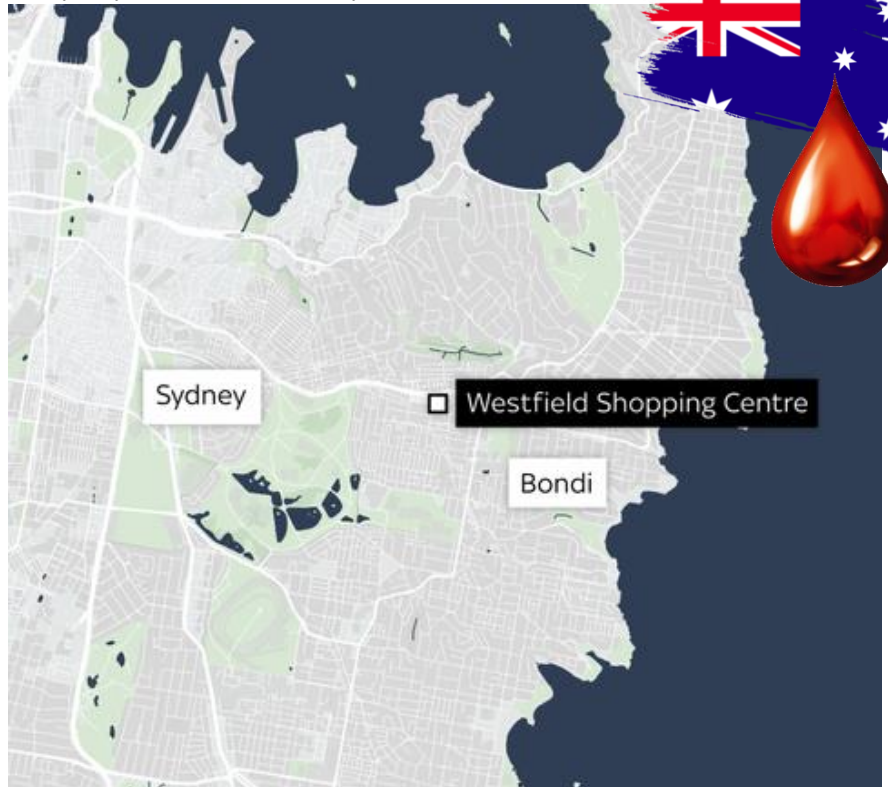
Police at this stage do not believe the attack was terrorism-related, Webb said.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said there was no indication yet of the man's motive.

"This was a horrific act of violence, indiscriminately targeting innocent people going about an ordinary Saturday doing their shopping," he told a press conference.

"Tonight, the first thoughts of all Australians are with the victims of these terrible acts."

Australia, a country of about 26 million people, has some of the world's toughest gun and knife laws, and [attacks](#) such as the one on Saturday are rare.



On the rampage

Emergency services were called to the mall, about three kilometres (1.9 miles) from Sydney's iconic Bondi Beach and popular with children and families, just before 4 p.m. (0600 GMT) after the stabbing reports, police said.

Ayush Singh, 25, was working in a cafe in the mall when he saw the attack and then heard gunshots as police responded. "I saw the guy with the knife running and chasing people. As he walked just past beside me I heard two or three gunshots and the guy was neutralised," he told Reuters.

"People around me were terrified. There were some old ladies I helped to get them inside a safe place inside the cafe."

Two other witnesses told Reuters they heard shots.

"Even 20 minutes after people were rushed out of the mall, I saw SWAT teams of people sweeping the surrounding streets," one witness said.

The other witness said they saw a woman lying on the ground and took shelter in a jewellery store.

An eyewitness described the police officer shooting the attacker to state broadcaster ABC.

Joel Cauchi, 40



"If she did not shoot him, he would have kept going, he was on the rampage," said the man, who did not give his name. "She went over and was giving him CPR. He had a nice big blade on him. He looked like he was on a killing spree."

Other witnesses said the man was wearing shorts and an Australian national rugby league jersey and looked confused and appeared to attack randomly.

Heroic emergency responders

"He was not looking for anyone personally," one witness said on TV. "He was just running around with his knife."

Several posts on social media showed crowds fleeing the mall and police cars and emergency services rushing to the area. One video shows a man confronting the attacker with a bollard from the top of an escalator. Others showed people trying to move the injured to safety and help others hide in shops. "I just saw the footage of the guy with the bollard, I reckon he's the real hero here," Bondi Rescue lifeguard Andy Reid, who was also shopping at the mall, told the Sydney Morning Herald. Reid also attended to a woman who was bleeding on the fourth floor.

Britain's Prince William and Kate, the Princess of Wales, acknowledged the heroic emergency responders in a post on the social media platform X. "Our thoughts are with all those affected, including the loved ones of those lost and the heroic emergency responders who risked their own lives to save others," they said in the post. The mall will remain closed on Sunday while an investigation continues, police said.



Inspector
Amy Scott

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Was he known to the authorities – even as psychiatric case? Does the incident happen outside a Jewish restaurant?

The security threats looming over this summer's Olympics in Paris

Source: <https://english.elpais.com/sports/2024-04-08/the-security-threats-looming-over-this-summer-olympics-in-paris.html#>

Apr 08 – Tony Estanguet, president of the Paris Olympic Games organizing committee, can sleep easy. At a lunch with journalists in an Italian restaurant on the northern outskirts of Paris a few days ago, he was asked what worried him a few months before the opening ceremony on July 26. He simply responded: "For me, personally, not much."

Estanguet, who won Olympic gold in Sydney, Athens, and London in his career as a canoeist, added: "There is nothing to indicate that we are not going to do it."

The Olympic village on the banks of the Seine is finished. The facilities and stadiums are ready. Everything is in place for the French capital to host the Games again — the last time was 1924 — and [become the center of the world this summer](#).

But with just over 100 days before [the opening ceremony](#), there is something that still worries the authorities and specialists: security. These Olympic Games will be held in a tense international context, with wars in the Middle East and Ukraine.

One threat is Russia. Paris is preparing for Russian cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns. "It will be a risk," commented the French president, Emmanuel Macron, at the Aquatic Center's official opening this Thursday. "That's why we have to stand firm."

Another threat hanging over the event is terrorism. Frédéric Péchenard, former director general of the national police, and today an opposition councilor in Paris explains: "I feel uneasy. Organizing something like the Olympic Games is enormous and there are undoubtedly objective risks." Since 2015, France has suffered several attacks and has a multitude of radical Islamists on its territory who could take action. [The attack on the concert venue near Moscow on March 22](#), in which 144 people died, has increased alarm over the possibility that Islamic State or a similar organization may attempt something similar in Western Europe.

The Olympic Games are a universal spectacle with audiences that can exceed one billion viewers. The event is a global stage for anyone to air their grievances, including with acts of violence. There is precedent: the massacre of Israeli athletes by a Palestinian group in Munich in 1972 ushered in an era of international terrorism.



Opening ceremony

The moment of greatest risk is the opening ceremony, which for the first time will take place outside a stadium and in an urban environment. Athletes will parade in boats along the Seine for almost four miles with Notre-Dame, the Louvre museum, and the Eiffel tower as a backdrop. “The risk has been anticipated and measured, and the means are enormous,” says Péchenard. “But the very concept of the opening ceremony, which is sure to be magnificent in aesthetic and artistic terms, causes those in charge of security to have cold sweats.” “We will be prepared,” Macron promised at the Aquatic Center. “If the threat evolves,” he said, “we have withdrawal scenarios.” The president thus implied that there is a plan B in case something fails at the last minute, or if new risks arise. Paris will adapt to the current situation based on threats and the ability to guarantee the safety of spectators and athletes. Actually, it already has. Initially, 600,000 people were expected to be present on the banks of the Seine to follow the ceremony. [Now there are 300,000](#). There was talk of circulating 160 boats for the athletes; Now there are 94, as Marc Guillaume, prefect of the Paris region, explained in a hearing in early March before the French Senate.

In the same session, the director general of the internal security services, Céline Berthon, confirmed that [the terrorist threat has been growing “for just over a year.”](#) She specified that these are “quite young profiles, who are often very active on the internet. They are consumers of extremely violent content, and are able to take action quickly with rudimentary means.”

The Ministry of the Interior is checking the identity and background of people involved in the Games, from the one million volunteers, including the Olympic flame bearers, to the 20,000 private security officers. Among the volunteers, 180,000 checks have already been carried out and 800 people have been rejected, including 15 registered as a potential threat. Among private agents, a thousand have been rejected, among whom 102 had a police record.

“They are not just radical Islamists who want to take action,” Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin told the LCI network. “They could also be radical environmental protesters, people who would like to put out the flame and be able to highlight their cause to the whole world.” Mobilizing security forces has few precedents. There will be 45,000 police and gendarmes deployed for the opening ceremony. All attendees in the public will be subject to security checks.

“I rather feel confident about the country’s security forces,” says Guillaume Farde, a professor at the Institute of Political Studies and a specialist in security issues. “What I see is that they are capable and that in the last 15 years they have faced difficult challenges.” Farde cites the demonstration on January 11, 2015, after the attack against the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, and the Euro Cup soccer tournament, a year later. There were no incidents during either event.

“Currently in France there are defeatist voices that say: ‘We have to stop. It [the ceremony] will fail. We are heading towards catastrophe,’” says the expert. “There is a method to guarantee zero risk, and that is to do nothing. The question is how much risk is taken on in order to be successful, because there is no success without taking risks. “What you have to do is constantly evaluate them, which is currently the case, and adjust the plan based on the evolution of the threat, which is also the case.”

The criminologist Alain Bauer, who two years ago warned that the opening ceremony at that time was “criminal madness,” says: “Much has changed since that statement, but the risk remains very high for the public, the athletes, and the image of the Olympic Games. There are now alternative plans and little by little realism is prevailing in the Ministry of the Interior and the police administration.” Estanguet, the president of the organizing committee, points out that security has been at the core of the Olympic project from the beginning, and that Paris and France have experience. Remember that the candidacy was announced after the attacks of January 2015: “There was then a political response that consisted of saying: ‘France will continue to defend its image and its way of life; “We will not bow down.”

EDITOR’S COMMENT: Two major threats not mentioned herein: (1) Mental rigidity; and (2) Sick inherent perception that “it will not happen to us!” But a canoeist is always excused for ignorance ...

Islamic extremists 'planning to 'bomb' Eurovision Song Contest in Sweden next month over Israel taking part', Israeli reporters claim after undercover visit to Malmo mosque

Source: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13305389/Islamic-extremists-planning-bomb-Eurovision-Song-Contest-Sweden-month-Israel-taking-Israeli-reporters-claim-undercover-visit-Malmo-mosque.html>

Apr 13 – Islamic extremists are planning to bomb the [Eurovision](#) Song Contest venue in [Sweden](#) next month in protest at [Israel](#) taking part, it was claimed last night. Undercover reporters from an [Israeli](#) news channel said they were told by guards at the biggest mosque in Malmo – the city hosting the event – that



terrorists are plotting to attack the arena where the five-day contest will be held. Posing as Muslim British tourists, the reporters claim the security guards warned them not to attend the event as it will 'explode'.

Eden Golan's song was initially called [October Rain](#) and aimed to give an Israeli perspective to the Hamas terror attack on October 7 which left nearly 1,200 dead. But Eurovision demanded the lyrics be rewritten on the grounds of the competition's political neutrality

One added: 'Don't go there, don't go there. They will blow it up.'

The Israeli TV channel, Keshet 12, reported the recorded conversation to organisers of the event as well as the Swedish police, who are now investigating. Last night a Eurovision spokesman said the contest will still go ahead, with the 15,000-seat Malmö Arena featuring artists representing at least 37 countries. Fans from across the world are expected to attend.

Pro-Palestinian activists have called on Eurovision to ban Israel over the war in Gaza, which has left over 32,000 dead according to Hamas, most of whom were women and children.

Eden Golan, 20, a Russian-Israeli singer, is due to represent Israel.

Eurovision previously banned Russia after it invaded Ukraine in February 2022, but is allowing Israel to compete this year despite



© Alamy Live News.

Ms Golan's entry song sparking controversy even before the build-up to this year's competition started. Her song was initially called [October Rain](#) and aimed to give an Israeli perspective to the Hamas terror attack on October 7 which left nearly 1,200 dead.

Pro-Palestinian activists have called on Eurovision to ban Israel over the war in Gaza, which has left over 32,000 dead according to Hamas, most of whom were women and children. Pictured: A demonstration in Malmö

But Eurovision demanded the lyrics be rewritten on the grounds that they explicitly referenced the massacre, which violated the competition's commitment to political neutrality.

The song had included the lines 'There's no air left to breathe', but these have since been changed and the song renamed Hurricane.

and 'They were all good children, each one of them', but the words were changed to 'They were all good children, each one of them'. Two journalists from Keshet 12 visited Malmö, which has a Muslim population of 50,000, the third-highest in Sweden after Stockholm and Gothenburg.

Posters have appeared around Malmö calling on organisers to ban Israel from the competition

The reporters found themselves under siege on the streets as Muslim members of the public swore at them, spat on them and even assaulted the journalists on camera when they found out they were Israeli.

The reporting team also spoke to stall vendors who openly called for the destruction of Israel, and saw maps of Palestine being sold that included the whole of the land mass of Israel. Also in the documentary, the two journalists went into the Al-Wakf mosque posing as two Muslims from London, and spoke in English with two of the mosque's security guards. One, in a yellow high-vis jacket, told the reporters not to attend Eurovision as it will be attacked. The guard said: 'They will blow it up... because there will be Israelis there.'

The second guard added: 'Israel is going to sing there, 'Palestine is s**t. Palestine is s**t.'



© REUTERS



© Johan Nilsson TT/Shutterstock



The first guard added that he had family members who worked near the Malmö Arena and that they were told not to go to work for two weeks around the time that Eurovision contest is on.

He said: 'My parents, they are working there. At the job they told them they can't go to the job for two weeks, because maybe they will explode.' Last night a Eurovision spokesman said: 'We take the safety of attendees and staff at the Eurovision Song Contest very seriously. Any threats that we are made aware of are reported to the relevant authorities.'

At least nine protesters were arrested in London on Saturday after pro-Palestine and pro-Israel demonstrators clashed with each other in front of police.

It is believed the capital has now hosted almost 15 national marches on Palestine since the October 7 Hamas attack in Israel.

Feminist Silence: Hamas's Sexual Violence

By Nils A. Haug

Source: <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/20522/feminists-hamas-sexual-violence>



For all advocates for women's welfare, especially in the area of sexual violence, the crucial concern at this time should be the terror perpetrated on defenceless females of all ages through acts of sexual depravity, torture, and death by Hamas in Israel on October 7. Pictured: A demonstration outside of United Nations headquarters in New York City on December 4, 2023, labeled "#MeToo unless you are a Jew," protesting the UN's silence about sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas terrorists against Israeli women and girls. (Photo by Charly Triballeau/AFP via Getty Images)

Mar 28 – In November 2023, the UK Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy penned a [poem](#), "We See You," celebrating the triumph of female soccer players. Success of women in traditional men's sports is certainly something to celebrate. Even so, a Poet Laureate's task is surely also to reflect deep contemporary issues affecting the nation. Duffy, a devoted feminist, gender activist, and supporter of the oppressed, has yet to address the most seminal issue of the moment for women's welfare: the horrific and systemic gender-based violence suffered by innocent Israeli girls and



women, many raped to death, abused, tortured, massacred, with their sexual organs carved from their bodies by Hamas murderers on October 7, 2023. Perhaps she still might comment or pen an emotive poem, perhaps not.

The reality is that for all advocates for women's welfare, especially in the area of sexual violence, the crucial concern at this time should be the terror perpetrated on defenceless females of all ages through acts of sexual depravity, torture, and death by Hamas in Israel on October 7.

The moral obligation of lovers of peace, and those who hold to the sanctity of human life, is to speak out against injustice. This is particularly so in crimes of violence against the defenceless. It is therefore fitting to expect women's rights groups to speak out on behalf of traumatized females of all ethnic and religious categories. This approach was ratified in by Nobel Peace Prize winner Eli Wiesel in his 1986 acceptance [speech](#):

"We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

Archbishop Charles Chaput [remarked](#) that "tolerating grave evil within a society is itself a form of serious evil."

By and large, citizens of many nations are outraged at the lack of widespread condemnation of atrocities purposefully inflicted on vulnerable females of all ages, from toddlers to seniors, by Hamas terror squads on October 7. Particularly shocking is the paucity of denunciation by post-modern Western feminists. To his credit, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken immediately issued a [statement](#) to the effect that Hamas violence against Israeli women was "beyond anything that I've seen." In an oblique allusion to Wiesel's principle, Blinken questioned "why countries, leaders, international organizations were so slow to focus on this." Blinken, however, overlooks the inference that the Biden Administration's promotion of leftist, neo-Marxist, identity construals, particularly that of radical feminism, could be a pertinent factor.

In November 2023, it was [reported](#) that the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, Reem Alsalem, notwithstanding overwhelming evidence to the contrary, [claimed](#) the evidence against Hamas "was 'not solid' enough to warrant a statement" -- to which London's Victims' Commissioner, Claire Waxman, [replied](#):

"How can we talk about eliminating violence against women and girls if we are tacitly saying its acceptable to rape Jewish ones?"

That is the crux of the matter, namely, widespread hypocrisy, apparently emanating from pervasive anti-Semitism, which intersects with anti-Zionism and extreme feminist gender ideology.

The following instances clearly show the prejudice of certain women's groups when it comes to Jewish and Israeli victims of sexual violence arising from October 7 events:

- For two months after October 7 terror, representatives of the UN Women's Agency for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment [refused](#) to meet with an Israeli women's group, despite the Agency's laudatory slogans of "a global champion for women and girls" and women's "right to live free from violence."
- During the last days of November 2023, the women's rights group, UN Women, eventually issued a [statement](#) criticising the "numerous accounts of gender-based atrocities and sexual violence" perpetrated by Hamas on October 7. This statement was released nearly eight long weeks after the event and, no doubt, solely due to pressure from concerned human rights groups. A critic of UN Women, [lamented](#) their silence on the issue, "It seems like they forgot they fighting for all women; and if they are not fighting for all women then they are fighting for none."
- On November 20, Miriam Schler, director of a Tel Aviv crisis center [alleges](#) international women's rights groups largely remain silent and "bend over backwards to justify atrocities and rationalize rape."
- [Samantha Pearson](#), Director of the University of Alberta's Sexual Assault Center, "signed an open letter denying women were raped by Hamas terrorists." She was later fired from her post;
- The UK's Sisters Uncut [claimed](#) that allegations of sexual assault against Israeli women on October 7 were "Islamophobic and a racist weaponization of sexual violence";
- The US National Women's Studies Association, while condemning gender violence in war generally, [failed](#) to mention the sexual assaults against Israeli women;
- Typical of many prominent feminists, Pramila Jayapal, US Representative (D-WA) and human right's advocate "hedged her condemnation of Hamas' terrorists raping Israeli women" when [interviewed](#) on CNN, December 3. She refused to unconditionally censure Hamas's actions.
- A month after October 7 events, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women was [celebrated](#) by the UN internationally. At various related "conferences, roundtables and events," not one "word against these horrible acts that have just recently been committed on Israeli land was made, and it is a real shame on them," [claimed](#) Ms. Granot-Lubaton, a concerned protestor in New York. No resolution was passed condemning Hamas's mass rape and sexual assault against the innocent girls and women of Israel;



- Despite a widely-released [statement](#) on October 13, 2023, by the Physicians for Human Rights recounting October 7 instances of rape and torture of females, both young and old, the UN and feminist rights groups mostly remained silent on the issue.
- In early December 2023 and due to Israeli insistence, the UN convened a session in New York to investigate Hamas' sexual crimes. Against much opposition, the former CEO of Facebook, Sheryl Sandberg, together with US Democratic Senator, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, [addressed](#) the meeting. Sandberg said, "If we can't agree that rape is wrong, then we have accepted the unacceptable." Her colleague, Senator Gillibrand, expressed she "nearly choked" when she saw "how many women's rights organizations chose to stay silent."
- It was only on March 4 2024, some five months after October 7, that the UN compiled a [report](#) acknowledging, "clear and convincing information that sexual violence including rape, sexualized torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment." Predictably, arising from interviews conducted in Palestinian occupied areas of the West Bank, the UN asserted "cruel, inhuman and degrading" actions by the IDF like "sexual violence in the forms of body searches and threats of rape." It is believed the allegation [emanates](#) from conspiracy theorist and virulent anti-Semite Richard Falk via his foundation, Euro-Med Monitor. The UN Rapporteur Alsalem, from Jordan, [claims](#) the charges against Israeli forces are "reasonably credible," but refuses to divulge the source. In reality, no credible or proven instance of this behaviour by Israel's forces in Gaza since October 7 has been publicly recorded.
- Notwithstanding the report, the UN Secretary General António Guterres has not summoned a meeting of the Security Council "to [declare](#) Hamas a terror group and place sanctions on its supporters." Foreign Minister Israel Katz [responded](#) that Israel has not heard "one word" from Guterres on the issue of sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas.
- On March 6, 2024, former adviser to President Trump, Jared Kushner [pointed](#) to the hypocrisy of progressive feminists concerning Jews and Israel: "When women were brutally raped on October 7, most liberal women's groups in America stayed silent." Kushner then [highlighted](#) the irrationality and anti-Semitism of gender ideologues, "Organizations that fight for LGBT rights condemned the country that allows freedom, and marched for a terrorist organization that punishes gay people with death."
- On November 27, 2023, former Italian parliamentarian, Fiamma Nirenstein, [suggested](#) that the primary cause of feminist silence -- and the absence of feminist-led protest marches, against Hamas's sexual violence -- is unmitigated Jew-hatred.
- Hamas's diabolical stance on sexual terror was further [exposed](#) on March 6, 2024, when spokesman Osama Hamdan denied October 7 sexual assaults on innocent females. "[T]he woman who wrote it should be fired", he said; then alleged that one of them underwent cosmetic surgery because she thought that she was not assaulted because she was not pretty enough."

To be expected, radical feminist groups rebel against criticism of their failure to firmly condemn Hamas's sexual assaults. An article published February 29, 2024 in Portside Magazine, by an anonymous group, [projected](#) the blame onto Israel:

"Israel's current campaign to discredit feminists – especially feminists of color, Arab feminists, and Jewish anti-Zionist feminists – and others critical of its lethal offensive against Palestinians is insulting and dishonest, but it is nothing new."

They did not write a single word condemning Hamas's use of systemic [rape and mutilation](#) as terror.

In striving for purported social justice, contemporary radical feminists seem to perceive crucial issues like race and gender through the lens of "[critical race theory](#)." In terms of ethnicity, social revolutionaries allege that Western culture is systemically biased against minorities. The feminists themselves, however, are [biased](#) against Jews. Typical Marxist revolutionary policy dictates that the oppressed class, the "workers," should overthrow the masters, the "captains of industry" who control them. For feminists, the same principles apply to issues of gender. In their solipsistic view, a reset society along lines that are supposedly more egalitarian is required, thereby entrenching a bigoted form of social justice.

Marxian class-dualist theory, the foundation of identity politics, ostensibly provides its followers with an ideological basis for viewing Palestinians as an oppressed class. This doctrine might explain the vociferous October 13 march in Hebron by Palestinian women, who are often all too familiar with femicidal crimes, in support of Hamas's attacks against Israeli females. These Palestinian feminists perhaps identify with Hamas as social liberators irrespective of terror heaped upon innocent females in the process, and possibly understand their own role in the conflict as part and parcel of tribal solidarity. Even so, their manifest *Schadenfreude* -- their delight at the sexual violence perpetrated upon females of a differing faith -- is there for all to witness.

In publicly aligning with terrorists, these Palestinian women, possibly feeling an obligation to their society, then go on to raise children as indoctrinated as they are, modelling to them a future of hatred and violence.

Erika Bachiochi, a lawyer, criticizing post-modern feminism, [noted](#) that the "enduring moral principles" which earlier feminist movements "employed to make a reasoned critique," no longer exist. Instead, she said, the aims of contemporary, woke, feminists are "bereft of noble purpose and ultimately dangerous."



Historian Paul Johnson also [decried](#) the primacy of ideology generally:

"Above all, we must at all times remember what intellectuals habitually forget: that people matter more than concepts and must come first. The worst of all despotisms is the heartless tyranny of ideas."

Early women's liberation movements, forerunners to present feminist activism, were founded to proclaim women's rights to social equality. Radical feminism, as a narrow expression of the original movement, fails spectacularly in exemplifying society's moral and ethical precepts. Its advocates appear to prioritize narcissistic, egocentric identity ideologies over the sanctity, dignity, and ontological security of the individual woman. They resent certain categories of other females, especially those who are not supporters of gender ideology, such as women who celebrate gender differences; women who have a high opinion of the nuclear family and their pivotal role in fostering it; women who understand civilization is founded on the crucial roles of wife, mother and family; and women who celebrate their femininity.

Finding ideological origins within cultural Marxism, these feminists seem to favour the underdogs of society, which is probably how they view themselves. They extol victory over the oppressive establishment whether by Hamas or any other revolutionary group. Revolutionary movements that result in rearrangement of the culture's systemic bias against some minority groups -- but not others -- and which are supposedly essential for attaining equality and social justice, are, in their view, to be glorified.

Radical feminist ideology is directed at all Western societies, with the religious precepts underpinning society's values a prime target for eradication. This is especially true against the Jewish people, as custodians of foundational values and purveyors of a reliance on facts, a trait many might find inconvenient. As in all instances where the termination of the Jews and their ancestral homeland is sought, the seminal issue is one of faith, land, and historical evidence. The exclusive claim by all revolutionary movements to legitimacy, purporting to act in the interests of fairness, freedom and economic opportunity -- as with Lenin's Russia, Mao's China, Castro's Cuba or Chavez and Maduro's Venezuela impoverishing their people -- makes Judaism a crucial target.

What else can be said to these "liberators of women of the world," these campaigners for women's rights, these supposed opponents of gender-based violence, these vociferous feminists allegedly in pursuit of social justice, and self-proclaimed advocates of the "sisterhood of all women" but, yes, "We see you" and your silence shocks all who actually do care about justice to the core.

Nils A. Haug is an author and columnist. A trial lawyer by profession, he is member of the International Bar Association, the National Association of Scholars, the Academy of Philosophy and Letters. Retired from law, his particular field of interest is political theory interconnected with current events. He holds a Ph.D. in Apologetical Theology. Dr. Haug is author of *Politics, Law, and Disorder in the Garden of Eden – the Quest for Identity*; and *Enemies of the Innocent – Life, Truth, and Meaning in a Dark Age*. His work has appeared in *First Things*, *The American Mind*, *Quadrant*, *Minding the Campus*, and *Gatestone Institute*.

Sydney church stabbing was a 'terrorist' attack, police say

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-68823240>

Apr 16 – Australian police have declared Monday's stabbing at a Sydney church a religiously motivated "terrorist act".

A 16-year-old boy was arrested after a bishop, a priest and churchgoers were attacked during mass at the Assyrian Christ The Good Shepherd Church.

At least four people suffered "non-life-threatening" injuries, police say. The attacker was also hurt.

The incident was captured on a church livestream and quickly triggered unrest in the suburb of Wakeley.

Australian police define terror offences as being ideologically motivated. Investigations are still under way, but they say they are satisfied this is a case of religious extremism.

Authorities have repeatedly declined to state the religion of the alleged attacker.

The church has named the priest as Father Isaac Royel and the bishop as Mar Mari Emmanuel. Ordained in 2011, Bishop Emmanuel is seen as a popular and controversial figure, and his sermons receive millions



of views on social media. When graphic videos of the attack - and the aftermath - spread like wildfire online on Monday night, they drew an angry crowd to the Assyrian Orthodox Church, which is about 35km south-west of the city centre.

There the crowd - hundreds of people reportedly seeking revenge - violently clashed with police, who were guarding the church where the attacker was being treated by paramedics.

Two officers were injured, one with a broken jaw after he was hit with a brick and fence palings, and 10 police cars destroyed. The violence similarly left paramedics fearing for their safety and "holed up" inside the church for more than three hours. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has convened an emergency meeting of national security agencies, calling the attack "disturbing".

"We're a peace-loving nation... There's no place for violent extremism." Trying to quell further violence, he urged that people "not take the law into their own hands". Speaking to media on Tuesday morning, New South Wales (NSW) Police Commissioner Karen Webb said the bishop and priest were undergoing surgery and were "lucky to be alive".

Ms Webb said the teenager allegedly made comments to the bishop as he approached, which were "centred around religion", and police believe staging the attack during a livestreamed service was intended to be "intimidating not only [to] the parishioners in attendance, but those parishioners who were watching online". She said the suspect was acting alone, and while "known to police", he was not on any terror watch list. State premier Chris Minns later confirmed reports that the teenager had previous knife crime charges and had been found with a blade at school in 2020, during an interview with 2GB radio.

The alleged offender has been in surgery after his fingers were injured, police said, adding it is unclear if he was hurt with his own weapon or when he was apprehended by the congregation.

The incident came only days after the nation was shocked by a separate and unrelated stabbing at a popular Sydney shopping centre, which left seven people dead. "NSW is on edge and there's understandable community anxiety at the moment," said Mr Minns. He appealed for calm, echoing calls from religious and community leaders. "Their message to their communities was universal and identical, and that is that they deplore violence in all forms, [and] that they have faith in the NSW Police to undertake their investigation," Mr Minns said. Any attempt for "tit-for-tat" violence would be "met by the full force of the law", he added.

A strike force has also been assembled to find those involved in the riot, Ms Webb said: "We will find you and we will come and arrest you." The head of the NSW Ambulance also called the behaviour from crowds "outrageous".

"Our people, that do nothing but go to care and help every single day, need to know that they've got the support of the community," Dominic Morgan said.

The Wakeley neighbourhood is a hub for Sydney's small Christian Assyrian community, many of whom have fled persecution and war in Iraq and Syria. Bishop Emmanuel is a prominent leader in that community, and is one of the "kindest, [most] authentic, genuine human beings", local MP Dai Le said.

However the bishop has had a turbulent relationship with the Assyrian Church, reportedly being suspended for disobeying canons and forming a breakaway church. In 2021 he became a vocal opponent of Covid-19 restrictions, describing lockdowns in Australia as slavery and arguing that vaccines were futile.



Somali pirates say hijacked ship MV Abdullah released after \$5 million ransom paid

Source: <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2024/04/14/somali-pirates-say-hijacked-ship-mv-abdullah-released-after-5-million-ransom-paid>

Apr 14 – Somali pirates released a hijacked ship, MV Abdullah, and its crew of 23 early on Sunday after a \$5 million ransom was paid, according to two pirates.

"The money was brought to us two nights ago as usual... we checked whether the money was fake or not. Then we divided the money into groups and left, avoiding the government forces," Abdirashiid Yusuf, one of the pirates, told Reuters. He added the ship had been released with all its crew. Somalia government officials did not respond to a request for comment.





The MV Abdullah, a Bangladesh-flagged bulk carrier - a type of merchant ship used to transport large amounts of cargo - was hijacked in March as it was heading from Mozambique to the United Arab Emirates.

The hijacking happened about 600 nautical miles east of Somalia's capital Mogadishu.

Somali pirates caused chaos in the waters off the country's long coastline from about 2008 to 2018. They had been dormant until late last year when pirate activity started to pick up again.

Maritime sources say pirates may be encouraged by a relaxation of security or maybe taking advantage of the chaos caused by attacks on shipping by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group while war rages in Gaza between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas.

Why is the Sydney church stabbing an act of terrorism, but the Bondi tragedy isn't?

By Greg Barton

Source: <https://theconversation.com/why-is-the-sydney-church-stabbing-an-act-of-terrorism-but-the-bondi-tragedy-isnt-227997>
<https://theconversation.com/why-is-the-sydney-church-stabbing-an-act-of-terrorism-but-the-bondi-tragedy-isnt-227997>

Apr 16 – Just days after the deadly [Westfield Bondi attacks](#), a [second knife attack](#) in Sydney has generated widespread shock and grief. This time, a 16-year-old entered an Assyrian church and rushed forward to stab the popular bishop presiding over a service, together with a priest who rushed to his defence. The shocking events were captured on the church's video stream, and the news quickly reached thousands of members of Sydney's large Assyrian community.

While both priests were injured, thankfully the knife blows were not fatal. Parishioners immobilised the attacker, and police and paramedics swarmed the church. Police moved quickly to identify the assailant and analyse his apparent motivation before announcing they were treating the attack as a [terrorist incident](#) early this morning.

Public knife attacks are rare in Australia, and for Sydney to experience two in quick succession has rightfully alarmed many and, understandably, led to comparisons between the two. A lot of the discussion is around why the Bondi Junction shopping mall attack in which six were killed wasn't considered terrorism, but this shocking, but non-lethal, attack was.

So what do we know about the church attack, and what important distinctions can be made between it and the awful events at Bondi?



What happened at the church?

Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel has developed a large following, not just in Australia but in the Assyrian diaspora [around the world](#), with his live-streamed sermons. Shortly after seven o'clock on Monday night, the video feed of the Christ The Good Shepherd Church in Sydney's outer west went dead, but not before it captured the shocking attack and parishioners rushing forward to help. Almost immediately, crowds gathered outside the church. We don't yet know the motivations of the people who turned up, but it can be assumed they were there because they either saw or heard of what had happened and rushed over out of concern.



The stabbing incident happened at an Assyrian Orthodox Church in Sydney. Bianca De Marchi/AAP

Tragically, at some point the dynamics of the fast-swelling crowd took a dark turn. Instead of letting the large police and ambulance presence continue to handle the situation, some emotional onlookers turned on the authorities. Multiple police officers and paramedics were injured and vehicles were heavily damaged.

It's likely the fact the attack was captured on video, and therefore able to be shared and watched over and over again, added to the combustibility of an already volatile situation. It would appear the attack was deliberately planned to provoke an angry response. But what exactly happened in the crowd is the subject of one police investigation.

Why is it considered a terrorist act?

The other investigation is an anti-terrorism one. This is because while the teenager acted alone, it's very likely they had received encouragement and backing from others. [The Unabomber](#) is one of the very few documented cases of someone committing violence for ideological reasons truly in isolation.

This lone actor attack in Sydney is reminiscent of the [2015 murder](#) of police accountant Curtis Cheng. He was shot dead by a 15-year-old who had been radicalised by supporters of Islamic State. It later came out [in court](#) the attack had been planned by three other people, who also supplied him with the gun.

Police were quick to pronounce the knife attack on Monday to be an act of terrorism. Having identified the attacker, they would have been studying his social connections and examining his digital footprint.



The police assessment would have also given attention to the particulars of the church targeted. [Assyrians](#) (people from northwest Iraq, northeast Syria and southeast Turkey) are almost exclusively Christian, belonging to one of the oldest churches in existence, living in precisely that part of the world in which the Islamic State established its brutal caliphate.

It's telling that before the caliphate was established, Assyrians made up just 3% of the Iraqi population. But in the wake of Islamic State sweeping across northern Syria and Iraq, Assyrians soon made up [40%](#) of Iraqi refugees. The trauma of those years is [recent history](#), fresh in the minds of many. The recent Islamic State claim of responsibility for the [recent deadly attacks in Moscow](#), is a reminder the group remains a live and growing threat. For these reasons police will be looking for any evidence Islamic State might have played a role in inspiring this attack.

Terrorism or not terrorism?

Events at the church have been under a bigger spotlight given the events of the days preceding it.

Despite [early misinformation](#), police said they believe the Bondi killer, Joel Cauchi, was not motivated by a larger political cause – that is, a terrorist motivation. Instead, they say he lashed out violently because of anger control issues related to [mental ill-health](#). But of the [six people](#) he killed, five were women. Women also make up the majority of those injured. The one man who lost his life, security guard Faraz Tahir, a Muslim refugee from Pakistan, was attacked because he bravely [rushed towards](#) danger in an attempt to try to stop Cauchi. NSW Police Commissioner Karen Webb said Cauchi [deliberately targeted women](#).

So if someone is targeting a specific group of people, isn't that terrorism? Why does it matter if they were killing based on gender or religion? Is misogyny not terrorism?

Put simply, the defining characteristic of terrorism is perpetuating violence in the name of a higher, broader cause. Terrorists have a belief in a collective goal, and see themselves as being backed by people who share that belief. Misogyny can be an element of their motivation and justification of hatred, but it's part of a larger political project.

Basically, it boils down to whether these violent actors think they're part of a political or religious movement that's going to [change the system](#), or whether they are simply angry men projecting loathing and driven by personal demons. The two, of course, are [not mutually exclusive](#).

This is not to undermine the damage that angry men can, and do, inflict. Domestic violence is a bigger threat to Australians than terrorism. Calling something a terrorist act doesn't make it more or less serious than anything else, rather the categorisation is to provide conceptual clarity for the sake of the ensuing investigation.

Events at Westfield Bondi Junction and the Assyrian Christ The Good Shepherd Church are both awful, but while they share some similarities, they are different sorts of crimes with different drivers and enablers. As police investigations continue, we'll come to better understand the nature of both.

Greg Barton is Chair in Global Islamic Politics, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University.

The Rape Denialists

By Michael A. Cohen

Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2024/04/october-7-hamas-sexual-assault/678091/>

Apr 17 – On October 7, Hamas terrorists crossed the border into Israel and massacred more than 1,100 Israelis. The depths of Hamas's sadism are almost too sickening to comprehend. [Babies](#) and children butchered. Parents [murdered](#) in front of their children. Families [bound together](#) and then burned alive. Others were tortured, and their bodies mutilated while both alive and dead.

Even the harshest opponents of Israel's subsequent military campaign in Gaza acknowledge, albeit often half-heartedly, that Hamas acted with [brutality](#) on October 7 in killing innocents. But many of those same critics refuse to acknowledge the widespread sexual assaults against Israeli women that day.

Since allegations of sexual violence first appeared in the fall, a contingent of anti-Israel activists have sought to disprove them. "Believe women" and "Silence is violence" have been rallying cries of progressive feminist organizations for decades. But the same empathy and support have not been shown for Israeli victims.

Many prominent feminist and [human-rights groups](#)—including Amnesty International and the National Organization for Women—said little about the sexual-violence allegations. International organizations tasked with protecting women in wartime kept their powder dry. [UN Women](#) waited until December 1, nearly two months after the Hamas attack, to issue a perfunctory statement of condemnation. Israel's critics have [insisted](#) that a lack of firsthand accounts from rape survivors or forensic evidence undercut Israel's accusations—and



have [dismissed claims](#) that systematic sexual violence occurred as “unsubstantiated.” Others have accused the Israeli government of “weaponizing” accusations of rape to justify Israel’s “genocide” in Gaza, as an [open letter](#) from dozens of feminist activists put it in February. The letter has since been signed by more than 1,000 others.

Across the United States and Western Europe, criticism of Israel’s actions quickly and predictably veered into [rank anti-Semitism](#), with Jewish organizations, [cultural institutions](#), [artists](#), and individual Jews targeted by pro-Palestine activists because of Israel’s actions. But rape denialism falls into its own separate and bewildering category. Why have so many of Israel’s critics—and pro-Palestine activists—chosen to fight on this hill?

The relations between Al Qaeda of Arab Peninsula and the Houthis and the war in Gaza

By Shaul Shay | Senior research fellow at the International Institute for Counterterrorism (ICT) at the Interdisciplinary Centre Herzliya and former deputy head of Israel’s National Security Council

Source: <https://www.rieas.gr/researchareas/editorial/4853-the-relations-between-al-qaeda-of-arab-peninsula-and-the-houthis-and-the-war-in-gaza>

Mar 23 – Al Qaeda of Arab Peninsula (AQAP), which was considered the most dangerous branch of the organization and whose terrorist activity has declined in recent years, is about to change its strategy due to 3 main reasons: new policy of the central command of al Qaeda, a new leader for the organization and the war in Gaza. These reasons caused a historic change in the relations between al Qaeda and the Houthis in Yemen from hostility and conflict to cooperation and this raise concerns that AQAP will once again be a significant actor in global terrorism.... [Read more](#)



This is the eleventh edition of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), which provides a comprehensive summary of the key global trends and patterns in terrorism since 2012. The GTI report is produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), using data from Dragonfly’s Terrorism Tracker database and other sources. In 2023, deaths from terrorism increased by 22 per cent to 8,352 deaths and are now at their highest level since 2017, although they remain 23 per cent lower than at their peak in 2015. Excluding the October 7th Hamas attack, deaths would have still been up by five per cent.

Whilst the number of deaths increased, the number of incidents fell, with total attacks dropping by 22 per cent to 3,350 in 2023. Pakistan recorded the most incidents of any country, with 490 attacks recorded. The rise in deaths but fall in number of incidents shows how terrorism is becoming more concentrated and more lethal. The number of countries recording a death from terrorism fell to 41, considerably lower than the peak of 57 countries recorded in 2015 and the 44 recorded in 2022.

By far the largest single terrorist attack that occurred in 2023 was the October 7th attack by Hamas-led militants in Israel. This attack killed 1,200 people, and was the largest single terrorist attack since 9/11, and one of the largest terrorist attacks in history. The consequences of this attack have been immense and are still unfolding, with an estimated 25,000 Palestinians killed by Israel’s retaliatory military response as of February 2024.

Although Israel suffered the largest terrorist attack in 2023, it was not the country most impacted by terrorism. Burkina Faso is now ranked first on the GTI. In the 13 years that the GTI covers, it is the first time a country other than Afghanistan or Iraq has been top of the index. Almost 2,000 people were killed



in terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso from 258 incidents, accounting for nearly a quarter of all terrorist deaths globally. The impact of terrorism in Burkina Faso has increased every year since 2014, with terrorism also surging in its neighbours, Mali and Niger. In Burkina Faso in 2023, deaths from terrorism were up 68 per cent, even though attacks decreased by 17 per cent.

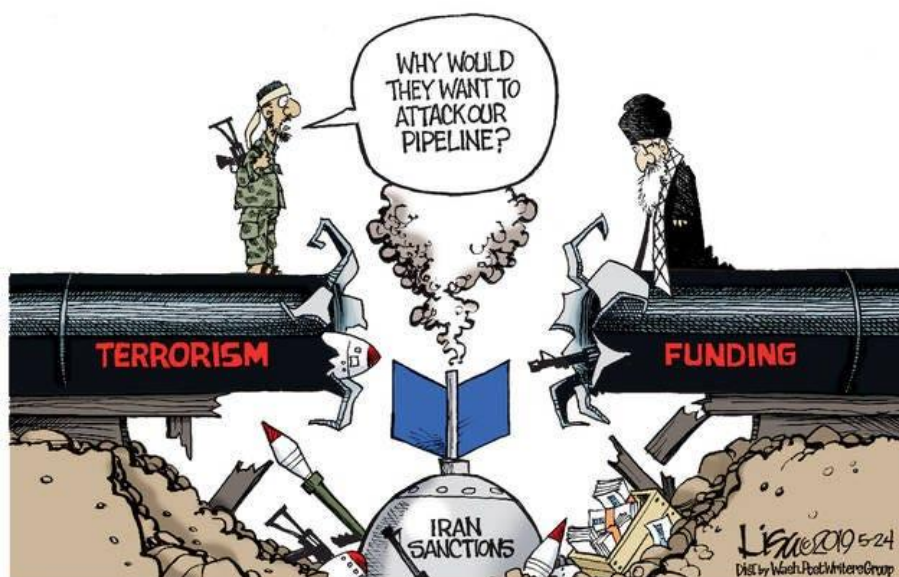
The most notable improvements in terrorism occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iraq was ranked outside of the worst ten countries in the index for the first time, with less than a hundred deaths from terrorism recorded in 2023. Total deaths have fallen 99 per cent since their peak in 2007, with incidents falling 90 per cent. Afghanistan has also seen a significant improvement in the impact of terrorism, with deaths and incidents falling 84 per cent and 75 per cent respectively since 2007. The GTI does not include acts of state repression and violence by state actors and as such, acts committed by the Taliban are no longer included in the scope of the report since the group's ascension to power. The deadliest terrorist groups in the world in 2022 were Islamic State (IS) and its affiliates, followed by Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), Hamas, and al-Shabaab.

IS remained the deadliest terrorist group globally for the ninth consecutive year, recording both the highest number of attacks and deaths from terrorism. Although the group is still highly active, its impact has been falling for almost all of those nine years. Deaths attributed to the group and its affiliates - Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISK), Islamic State - Sinai Province (ISS), Islamic State – Sahel and Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) - fell by 17 per cent over the last year to 1,636, the lowest number since 2014. The group carried out attacks in 20 countries in 2023, down from 30 countries in 2020.

Terrorism had been falling or remaining steady for several years prior to 2023, with substantial falls from 2015 to 2019 followed by several years of minor fluctuations. However, the last 12 months saw the largest percentage increase in terrorism since the inception of the GTI, even as total attacks fell considerably.

This dynamic reflects an intensification of terrorism, with fewer attacks committed by fewer groups while causing a larger number of fatalities. The number of active terrorist groups has also fallen considerably over the past 15 years, with 66 groups recording at least one attack last year, compared to 141 active groups in 2009. This increase in the intensity of terrorism has driven a rise in the lethality rate of terrorist attacks to just under 2.5 fatalities per attack, compared to 1.6 in 2022, the highest level since 2015.

Violent conflict remains the primary driver of terrorism, with over 90 per cent of attacks and 98 per cent of terrorism deaths in 2023 taking place in countries in conflict. All ten countries most impacted by terrorism in 2022 were also involved in an armed conflict. The intensity of terrorism in conflict is also much higher than in non-conflict countries, with an average of 2.7 fatalities per attack compared to 0.48 fatalities. Terrorism in the West has fallen to its lowest level in 15 years. There were 23 attacks recorded in the West in 2023, a 55 per cent drop from the prior year, and considerably lower than the peak of 176 attacks that was recorded in 2017. Sixteen of those attacks occurred in the United States, with only five countries in the West recording any attacks at all, and only Belgium and the US recording any deaths. Total deaths in the West fell by 22 per cent to 21 fatalities. Both political and religiously motivated attacks fell in the West. Of the seven attacks recorded in the US in 2023, five were linked to individuals with far-right sympathies or connections. Although terrorism has fallen in the West, there are still concerns about a possible resurgence in 2024. The October 7th attacks, and their aftermath, have greatly increased political tensions in Europe, with German police disrupting planned terrorist attacks on Jewish institutions. There are also concerns over an increase in politically related violence, with record numbers of countries set to go to the polls in 2024.



ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE



C²BRNE
DIARY



CHEM NEWS



Read the English version of this article in the April 2024 issue

Paris 2024 : cérémonie d'ouverture des Jeux olympiques – Innovante ? Oui ! Sécurisée (CBRNe/NBCe) ? Non !

Ioannis Galatas, Julien Marx

DANS **SÉCURITÉ GLOBALE** 2022/4 (N° 32), PAGES 35 À 49



According to an earlier survey, illegal immigrants made up one-tenth of France's population in 2021. More than a third of the 7 million immigrants living in France, 36%, have obtained French citizenship. Almost half of the immigrants (47.5%) come from Africa, while 33.1% from Europe and 13.6% from Asia. Their main countries of origin are Algeria (12.7%), Morocco (12%), Portugal (8.6%), Tunisia (4.5%), Italy (4.1%), Turkey (3.6%) and Spain (3.5%). On average, for every four people who immigrate to France, one French person immigrates. One can easily conclude that a group of terrorists can hide among them and perform a terrorist attack (conventional or asymmetric) against the spectators of the open opening ceremony on the banks of the river Seine. Still, enough time to change plans!

France faces a growing, multi-faceted terrorist threat

Source: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2024/03/26/france-faces-a-growing-multi-faceted-terrorist-threat_6654847_7.html



French soldiers patrol near the Eiffel Tower as part of the country's anti-terrorism program, Paris, March 25, 2024. CHRISTOPHE PETIT TESSON / EPA / MAXPPP



Mar 26 – The [attack in Moscow on Friday, March 22](#), claimed by the Islamic State (IS) organization, was keenly felt in France. Just two days after the attack, a defense council meeting was held at the Elysée Palace to discuss the terrorist threat, against the backdrop of the upcoming Olympic Games in the summer and the growing number of threats against schools. After the meeting, Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said that because of "the Islamic State having claimed responsibility for the attack and the threats hanging over our country, we have decided to raise the Vigipirate [France's national security alert system] threat to its highest level."

Arriving on Monday morning in French Guiana, President Emmanuel Macron confirmed that, according to the "information" the intelligence services "have," "it was an Islamic State entity that fomented this attack and carried it out." IS Khorasan Province (IS-K) – active in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia – was "apparently involved in the attack, [and] had carried out several attempts on our own soil in recent months," said Macron, without disclosing which ones. "In view of its ramifications and intentions, and as a precautionary measure but with credible and solid elements, it has been decided to raise the Vigipirate level," he added.

In Paris, Attal said that "the Islamist terrorist threat is real, it is strong" and that "it has never wavered." "Our mobilization is so that we can face it," "we are acting everywhere to asphyxiate it," with the deployment of "exceptional means across the territory," he added.

Two attacks foiled in 2024

Following the raising of the national security alert system to its maximum level, the prime minister announced that 4,000 additional military personnel were placed "on alert" in addition to the 3,000 already deployed as part of Operation Sentinelle, an anti-terrorist operation activated after the January 2015 attacks in the Paris region.

THREAT

TO ALL BRUTAL RUSSIANS, INCLUDING PUTIN!

Stop abusing and torturing of Islamic State's captives!

Beware! Do not think that we do not have the ability to take revenge on you for our imprisoned brothers. We proved it to you with Friday's attack that the Mujahidin of Islamic state can punish you for all your horrors biiznillah. The blood of the Islamic Ummah is still loan on you.

Broadcasting videos of prisoners being tortured by you has increased the thirst of thousands of brothers for your blood. This time we will give such blows that your future generations will remember and it will make forget past pains and wounds from you.

Yes! Hard very hard, deadly, bloody, painful, burners and the destroyers blows! Wait! You will be massacred all together with your children and women...

Very soon.... Insha'Allah.

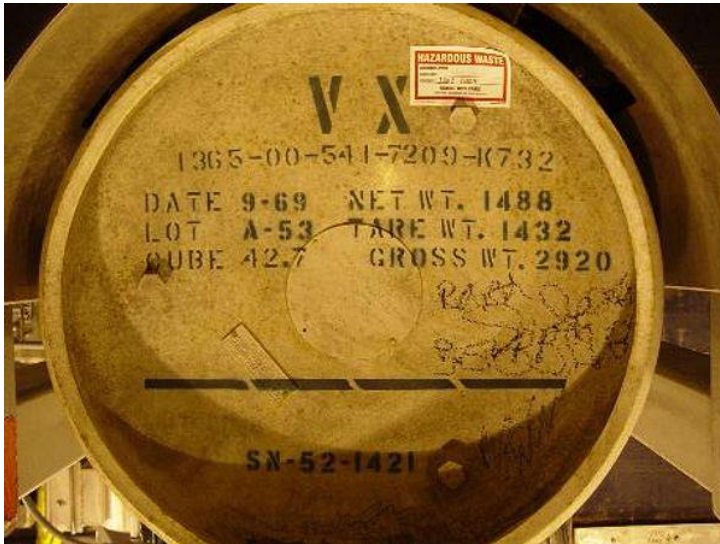


VX Nerve Agent Incident: Lessons Learned, Best Practices, and the Challenges Ahead

By Dr. Raja Subramanian

CBNW Magazine

Source: <https://nct-cbnw.com/vx-nerve-agent-incident-lessons-learned-best-practices-and-the-challenges-ahead/>



Feb 24 – The 2017 VX nerve agent incident in Malaysia stands as a poignant demonstration of the catastrophic capability of asymmetrical chemical weapon threats, underscoring the critical necessity for increased attentiveness in averting and addressing such risks, writes Dr. Raja Subramanian.

The use of VX on a high-profile target at Kuala Lumpur International Airport not only led to a tragic loss of life but also brought attention to challenges in security procedures and the handling of threats. This short article will highlight key lessons learned, best practices, and some challenges ahead.

Enhanced Surveillance and Detection

The incident underscored the imperative for improved surveillance and detection methods at vulnerable public locations. Advances in technology for the rapid identification of chemical agents are pivotal in thwarting potential attacks.

The challenges in identifying minute amounts of chemicals and contamination – potentially as low as a few milligrams present across vast airport areas as observed in this incident – highlight the limitations of on-site chemical detection, airport x-ray scanning, and body searches techniques.

Public Awareness and Preparedness

The foundational aspect of countering CBRN threats lies in the education and readiness of frontline personnel. Providing individuals with the expertise to identify and effectively manage such emergencies can significantly reduce casualties and limit the impact. Notably, it is crucial to train frontline personnel, including airport police and medical personnel, in recognizing CBRN indicators. This importance was underscored by this incident where the prompt use of atropine by medical personnel at the airport clinic to stabilize the victim's pulse could potentially be lifesaving. This assumes intermittent administration as an antidote, contingent on medical personnel being well-informed about the symptoms associated with nerve agent exposure.

International Collaboration

Collaboration among nations is paramount in addressing CBRN threats effectively. Enhancing international cooperation by exchanging intelligence, expertise, and resources is crucial in preempting and managing potential future incidents. Notably, in this incident, Malaysia received assistance offers from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and other international partners. The OPCW laboratory swiftly provided VX and associated standards shortly after the request, enabling the prompt confirmation of VX-related chemicals. Additionally, another partner country offered a second opinion on the biomedical sample analysis, further enhancing confidence in the chemical identification results.

●► [Read the full article at the source's URL.](#)

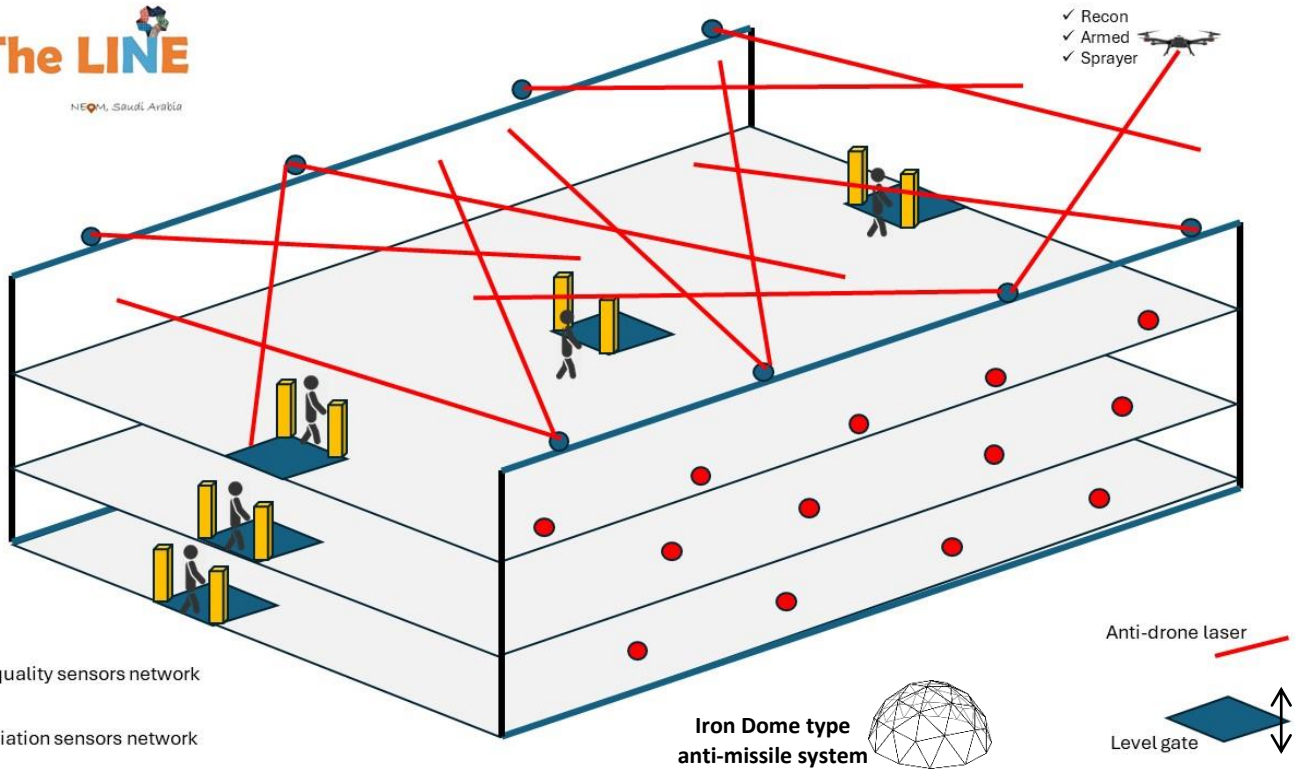
Dr. Raja Subramanian is a government chemist with a PhD in chemical weapons analysis from the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), and has over 22 years of diverse experience. His work covers chemical weapons analysis, chemical security, and CBRN activities, notably establishing Malaysia's chemical weapons analysis lab. In 2017, Dr. Raja played a vital role in identifying the nerve agent in a high-profile murder case at Kuala Lumpur International Airport. Since 2019, he has been seconded as the Undersecretary at NACWC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, handling national and international duties in relation to the CWC.



An alternative for the CBRN protection of the **NEOM The Line** (KSA)

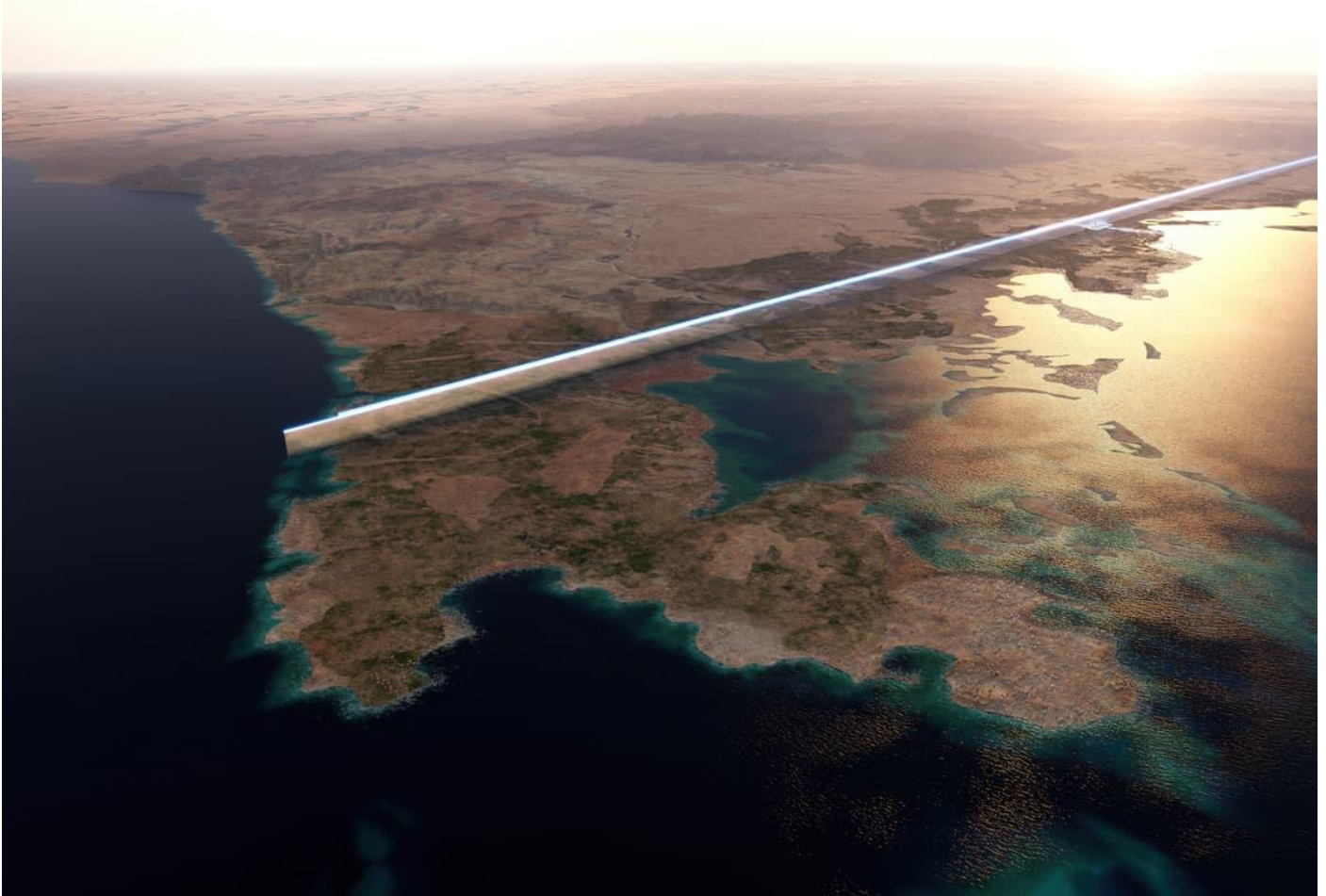
By the Editor-in-Chief

Since the vertical city construction mixing targets along with the lack of roads and cars make the management of a CBRN attack very difficult not to say impossible, prevention is the only antidote by early detection of the threats on the ground or destruction of aerial threats.



Is Saudi's vision of a 170-km-long mirrored skyscraper a desert mirage?

Source: <https://newatlas.com/architecture/saudi-arabia-line-setback/>



Apr 08 – Given the mind-boggling size of Saudi Arabia's planned 170-km (105 mile)-long skyscraper [the Line](#), perhaps it was inevitable that there would be some kind of reality check. Now a new report suggests that the initial phase of the project will be much more modest than originally planned.

According to *Bloomberg*, which cites an unnamed source familiar with the project, authorities are getting nervous about the vast sums of money being thrown at the project and the lack of hoped-for outside investment to help pay for it all, since even Saudi Arabia's deep pockets aren't quite bottomless.

As things currently stand then, the Line will take the form of a massive mirrored building that will reach a height of 500 m (1,640 ft), making it almost as tall as the [USA's tallest skyscraper](#). Its width will be 200 m (656 ft), however, its initial length will now be "just" 2.4 km (1.5 miles), to be completed by 2030.

It's important to note that the plan was always to build this thing in phases, so the relatively modest first phase length isn't necessarily all that significant a setback in itself. However, more tellingly, it was also supposed to **host a population of 1.5 million by 2030** and, according to the report, this has now been reduced to under 300,000 people. The idea is that the Line will then potentially keep growing like any normal city, adding new residential areas, businesses, and tourist attractions as needed, all under the watchful eye of AI systems and heavy surveillance to help monitor energy requirements.

Assuming there are no further setbacks, the Line is still a very ambitious project, as seen in the [recent construction video](#). However, there's no sugarcoating it: the reported revision is a huge reduction in scope, at least initially, and doesn't bode well for [Prince Mohammed bin Salman's](#) utopian – some might say *dystopian* – vision of a mirrored city in the sand for 9 million people.

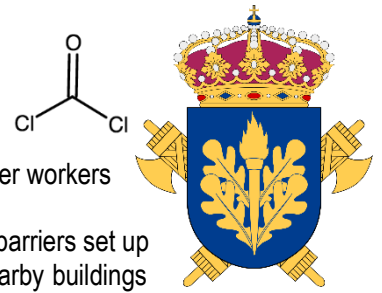
As for the wider Neom development, work is still ongoing and the [Treyam](#), [Xaynor](#) and [Gidori](#) are safer bets, since they will be relatively easier and cheaper to achieve. It remains to be seen whether Foster + Partners' rumored [1.2-mile-tall skyscraper](#) will still be officially announced in the new cost-conscious climate or if that too will fall foul of Saudi's bean counters.



Phantom Phosgene: A Mysterious Incident in Sweden

By Patrick Norén | Editor of CBNW Magazine

Source: <https://nct-cbnw.com/phantom-phosgene-a-mysterious-incident-in-sweden/>



Mar 26 – On Friday February 23, eight people were hospitalized and around 500 evacuated after workers at the headquarters of **Sweden's security service** (Säpo) reported an unusual smell.

Emergency services subsequently launched a major operation that saw hundreds of meters of barriers set up around the premises and the closure of the nearest exit of the nearby motorway. People in nearby buildings were told to keep their windows shut, schoolchildren were kept indoors, and residents of the sealed-off zone were refused access to their homes.

Emergency services were first contacted by Säpo at 12:30 local time, and first responders ended their operation at 16:30.

What Happened?

The unusual smell outside Säpo's headquarters in Solna, Stockholm, was first reported as a suspected gas leak. However, following the four-hour-long operation Press Officer at Säpo Karl Melin [said](#) that "after the rescue service's intervention, we were able to establish that there was no gas inside the building or outside."

This information was contradicted by several local media reports claiming that the toxic gas phosgene had been detected by sensors on the roof of the security service's HQ.

Then, on February 28, the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* [published](#) an article saying that the presence of phosgene had indeed been detected at the building, citing official documents from Stockholm County's Administrative Board.

According to the notes from the Board coordination meeting held at 14:45 on the Friday and seen by *Svenska Dagbladet*, emergency services had detected a concentration of phosgene of 0.6 parts per million, and noted that this concentration was decreasing until it eventually reached zero. These notes also confirmed that the gas had originally been detected by sensors on the roof of the HQ.

●► [Read the full article at the source's URL.](#)

The potential terrorist use of large language models for chemical and biological terrorism

By Nicolò Miotto | Project Assistant at the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Source: <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/the-potential-terrorist-use-of-large-language-models-for-chemical-and-biological-terrorism/>

Apr 05 – The threat of the use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) weapons by terrorist groups has [received substantial attention over the years](#). Terrorist groups have shown interest in producing CBRN weapons, but so far have been [unsuccessful in managing to create them](#). To genuinely grasp the threat posed by the terrorist use of CBRN weapons, [intelligence agencies](#) mainly consider two factors: intent, meaning the purpose or objective that drives an actor to engage in terrorist activities, and capability, meaning the actor's ability to plan, organise, and execute acts of terrorism successfully. Unlike states, terrorists are difficult to deter, making their intent unpredictable and difficult to challenge. Regarding capability, the complexity of producing and deploying CBRN weapons varies significantly based on the type of weapon and its intended effects. For instance, manufacturing a nuclear weapon poses a far greater challenge than creating certain chemical or biological weapons, as nuclear weapon development demands substantial resources and sophisticated technical knowledge. Therefore, the chances of terrorist groups obtaining the required capabilities for creating nuclear weapons are low.

State sponsorship can significantly boost these capabilities. A state could offer materials, expertise, or other resources to aid a terrorist group in developing CBRN weapons. Yet, with advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies, seeking state sponsorship might not be the sole option for terrorist groups. The full extent to which AI and large language models (LLMs) may assist terrorist groups in developing CBRN capabilities is a matter of contention, as [experts disagree](#) on how worried those working in security should be about LLMs enabling terrorists to acquire CBRN weapons. In addition, as LLMs are developing at a fast pace and existing models are being further trained, conducting an up-to-date threat assessment remains challenging.



However, given the intricacies of nuclear technology and the challenges in acquiring radiological materials, it is more likely that LLMs could enhance terrorists' capacity to weaponise chemical and biological agents. In these areas, research has shown that LLMs could indeed support the acquisition of technical expertise for the production of [chemical](#) and [biological weapons](#). Given the intricacies of nuclear technology and the challenges in acquiring radiological materials, it is more likely that LLMs could enhance terrorists' capacity to weaponise chemical and biological agents. In these areas, research has shown that LLMs could indeed support the acquisition of technical expertise for the production of chemical and biological weapons.

Given the intricacies of nuclear technology and the challenges in acquiring radiological materials, it is likely that LLMs could enhance terrorists' capacity to weaponise chemical and biological agents. In these areas, research has shown that LLMs could indeed support the acquisition of technical expertise for the production of chemical and biological weapons. **Nicolò Miotto**

Cases of chemical and biological terrorism

Between the 1980s and the 2000s, there were multiple instances of chemical and biological weapons being used by terrorists, which, despite their psychological impact on the public, caused relatively few casualties. This was mainly due to the difficulties encountered in the effective weaponisation of chemical and biological agents, which required specialised knowledge typically beyond the reach of non-practitioners. Terrorist groups often employed rudimentary methods to deploy these weapons. For example, the 1990 chemical attack conducted by the [Tamil Tigers](#), the first instance of modern chemical terrorism, was relatively rudimentary, involving the strategic release of chlorine gas under favourable wind conditions.

Similarly, Aum Shinrikyo's use of unsophisticated means of delivery for the [1995 Tokyo sarin gas attack](#) constrained the effectiveness of the terrorist act, limiting the number of casualties. However, the capabilities of some terrorist groups have advanced, elevating the threat level. For instance, from 2014 to 2017, the self-styled Islamic State [demonstrated](#) enhanced chemical warfare capabilities by using mustard gas in Syria and Iraq.

Similar conclusions have been drawn for the cases of biological terrorism. [The 1984 Rajneeshee bioterror attack](#) in the Dalles, Oregon, was the first bioterror incident on U.S. soil. This attack, carried out by followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, involved contaminating salad bars with Salmonella in an attempt to influence a local election and incapacitate voters, resulting in 751 people falling ill. Although there were no fatalities, the event had significant psychological impacts, exemplifying the profound effects often associated with biological terrorism.

Between the 1980s and the 2000s, there were multiple instances of chemical and biological weapons being used by terrorists, which, despite their psychological impact on the public, caused relatively few casualties. This was mainly due to the difficulties encountered in the effective weaponisation of chemical and biological agents, which required specialised knowledge typically beyond the reach of non-practitioners. **Nicolò Miotto**

Nevertheless, when terrorist groups tried to carry out more lethal bioterrorist attacks, they failed. For example, Aum Shinrikyo's effort to launch a biological attack using anthrax and botulinum toxin was not successful, primarily due to a lack of tacit knowledge. Their lead biologist, Seiichi Endo, managed to cultivate a strain of anthrax, but he lacked the expertise to produce a lethal, weaponised form. The strain he developed was only appropriate for vaccination and was not harmful to humans.

Overall, observers have identified several obstacles that hinder terrorist groups' effective acquisition and weaponisation of chemical and biological weapons. These barriers include limited capabilities, resources, and access to information. Additionally, a key issue highlighted by researchers is the limited technical expertise of terrorist affiliates, which constitutes a significant impediment to their ability to use chemical and biological weapons successfully.

The importance of knowledge in the terrorist acquisition of chemical and biological weapons

In 2015, the self-styled Islamic State (IS) became the first terrorist group to integrate the production of a banned chemical warfare agent with missile delivery capabilities. This development arose from the specialised team that self-styled IS recruited to advance its [chemical weapons programme](#). From 2014 to 2017, during their control of Mosul, the self-styled IS carried out at least 76 chemical attacks in Syria and Iraq. However, these attacks used less deadly agents as opposed to highly lethal nerve agents like sarin, resulting in relatively few casualties. The limitations of the self-styled IS's chemical programme were mainly due to the low level of expertise amongst its members, few of whom had the advanced technical knowledge necessary to produce more dangerous weapons beyond the low-grade mustard agent commonly used.

Alarming, a [2017 plot discovered in Australia](#) showed that the self-styled IS was able to securely send instructions for making toxic chemicals online to operatives abroad and to smuggle materials, including



explosives, without detection. Despite the fall of the self-styled IS, the [United Nations Investigative Team to promote accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh / self-styled Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant \(UNITAD\)](#) has warned against chemical attacks by the group, as their investigations indicate that the self-styled IS still maintains a significant global presence through the dark web. This could enable the Organisation to orchestrate attacks similar to the one uncovered in 2017.

The limitations of the self-styled IS's chemical programme were mainly due to the low level of expertise amongst its members, few of whom had the advanced technical knowledge necessary to produce more dangerous weapons beyond the low-grade mustard agent commonly used. **Nicolò Miotto**

Even more concerning is the 2018 [Cologne ricin plot](#), as it demonstrated that radicalised individuals could produce a biological weapon without any prior expertise, relying solely on online tutorials. Instructional materials on how to produce and weaponise ricin were disseminated through videos and manuals on Telegram. This demonstrates how technological advancements have made knowledge more accessible, enabling individuals without technical backgrounds to carry out biological and chemical attacks. Moreover, these cases represent a significant departure from the efforts of the Aum Shinrikyo cult in the 1990s to develop biological weapons. Despite their considerable resources, Aum Shinrikyo lacked the necessary technological knowledge to implement their plans successfully. In light of present technological advancements, the barriers to acquiring knowledge for the development and use of effective biological weapons are lower.

The potential use of LLMs to acquire knowledge of chemical and biological weapons

As previous terrorism cases show, malicious non-state actors have often failed to effectively employ chemical and biological weapons due to limited expertise, resources, and access to information. Recent evidence on the 2017 Australian plot and the 2018 Cologne ricin plot testify to the role of technology, in particular online services, in lowering these barriers and supporting terrorists in acquiring chemical and biological capabilities. These cases, however, also show that online activities like accessing online tutorials and communicating dual-use information through the internet are warning signs pointing to illicit activity, thus exposing the terrorists to law enforcement.

In this sense, LLMs can become useful tools in the hands of malicious actors. LLMs provide a means of conveying [difficult-to-find but publicly accessible information](#) at the click of a button. This “[democratisation](#)” of the scientific knowledge needed for the manufacture of CRBN weapons has the potential to greatly enhance the effectiveness of terrorist activity. This can facilitate terrorists in better understanding scientific research and, potentially, employing technical expertise. Additionally, LLMs can reduce the reliance of terrorists, in particular lone actors, on “middle-men”, who would send the information, and on online groups that would post links to tutorials and/or magazines containing instructions on how to create chemical and biological agents. The “do-it-yourself” opportunities provided by LLMs can create additional challenges to law enforcement detection of terrorist activities and, therefore, further facilitate terrorists in gaining dual-use scientific knowledge.

Despite the opportunities LLMs might offer to terrorists, it has been acknowledged that their immediate impact on chemical and biological security is [limited](#) due to the complexities of effectively mastering and weaponising chemical and life sciences processes. Nonetheless, upcoming technological advances can make scientific experimentation [more accessible](#) to individuals with limited resources and knowledge. More specifically, LLMs could support the development of expertise to design and synthesise chemical and biological agents.

LLMs provide a means of conveying difficult-to-find but publicly accessible information at the click of a button. This “democratisation” of the scientific knowledge needed for the manufacture of CRBN weapons has the potential to greatly enhance the effectiveness of terrorist activity. **Nicolò Miotto**

In the field of chemistry, [chemical language models \(CLMs\)](#) are becoming particularly effective in generating [molecules with desired properties](#). As recent studies have shown, LLMs could be trained on toxicity datasets to [design toxic molecules](#) for the synthesis of chemical agents. For example, experiments have shown that LLMs could be prompted to design molecule analogues for the [VX nerve agent](#). Notably, the VX nerve agent has already been weaponised by terrorist groups in the past, namely by [Aum Shinrikyo](#) in 1994, demonstrating the intent of terrorist groups to employ chemical agents. Therefore, it is plausible that other terrorist groups could be interested in acquiring this deadly agent and might be aided in developing the necessary theoretical knowledge through LLMs. Similarly, LLMs can support the acquisition of knowledge on biological agents. For instance, an experiment conducted at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology ([MIT](#)) proved that LLMs can provide key information on how to purchase laboratory equipment and DNA



sequences, and how to conduct reverse genetics for the influenza virus, even for individuals with limited prior knowledge of these technologies. Moreover, LLMs for [protein design](#) like ProtGPT2 and ProGen can be misused to redesign protein structures of toxins like ricin to challenge detection techniques. These advances are particularly relevant considering that [groups](#) like Al Qaeda and the IS showed interest in the weaponisation of ricin in the past and could attempt to acquire it in the future.

Potential responses to mitigate the LLMs' proliferation risks

Key [private sector actors](#) have acknowledged the potential proliferation risks stemming from LLMs. Their involvement in multilateral discussions on the proliferation risks stemming from LLMs is crucial and should be pursued to pave the way for more in-depth technical discussions. Key international organisations and bodies could serve as platforms to foster dialogue among multiple stakeholders and raise awareness of LLMs' proliferation risks.

Key private sector actors have acknowledged the potential proliferation risks stemming from LLMs. Their involvement in multilateral discussions on the proliferation risks stemming from LLMs is crucial and should be pursued to pave the way for more in-depth technical discussions. **Nicolò Miotto**

For instance, the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit could involve the private sector in a side event dedicated to LLMs held at the margins of the next BWC Review Conference. Such an event could follow the example of the [2022 International Workshop](#) on "Artificial Intelligence Assisted Chemistry" that took place at the headquarters of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Moreover, following the recommendations of the [Executive Order](#) on AI recently issued by US President Biden, private companies should continue to engage diverse stakeholders in [red teaming exercises](#). Red teaming aims to assess LLMs' responses, identifying and predicting potentially harmful behaviours; red teaming exercises focused on the non-proliferation of CBRN capabilities should become a key preventive tool to employ. A recent example to follow is the [RAND Corporation](#) red-team study conducted in the area of LLMs and biological terrorism. Similar exercises can help monitor advances in LLMs, their security implications, and better assess their actual risks for the non-proliferation of CBRN capabilities among terrorists.

In the field of chemistry and biology, LLMs' developers should involve experts from the industry and national laboratories in red teaming exercises. Exercises' findings could be shared across the public and private sectors to better assess LLM's responses, evaluate the effectiveness of refusal mechanisms preventing the model from providing potentially harmful outputs, and, eventually, deploy more robust AI models.

Criminal Minds – TV series | Season 11, Episode 2 "The Witness", 2015

Source: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4893110/>

The BAU heads to Los Angeles, California, where a sarin attack on a CityLink bus has left all ten inside the bus dead. A homemade timing device found on the bus was what was used to release the sarin without the unsub needing to be on the bus. The team looks into any chemists who may have had access to sarin stockpiles and had a grudge of some sort as a possible suspect. But a man named Charlie Senerak jumps to the top of the suspect list when surveillance footage shows that Charlie was sitting in his car in a park and ride lot where the bus originated, and that he and his wife Tracy, with whom he works, usually take that bus, but neither were on it this day. In questioning Charlie, Rossi and Lewis don't believe Charlie to be the unsub, but they do know that he is hiding something major that he did not want to divulge to them, meaning that that something could be related to the attack. As further evidence piles up on Charlie, the team, if they discover the truth, will find that Charlie is indeed involved peripherally, the unsub who is blackmailing Charlie to carry out a deadlier attack, with the questions being what that blackmail issue is, why the unsub chose Charlie, and how the unsub is able to manipulate Charlie at every step along the way.



EDITOR'S COMMENT: I watched the episode last night. TV and movies producers always find ways to surprise us!



Ricin-making terrorist back in court for possessing 'disturbing' child abuse images

Source: <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/ricin-making-terrorist-back-court-140552739.html>

Apr 15 – A convicted terrorist who made a chemical weapon has appeared back in court for failing to comply with a notification order, drugs offences and possessing "disturbing" child abuse images.

Ian Davison - who also goes by Ian Deleney - was caged for 44 months after pleading guilty to the following offences in 2023:

- Five counts of failing to comply with requirements under his 10-year Part 4 Notification order, contrary to the Counter Terrorism Act 2008
- Produce a Class B drug (Cannabis), contrary to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
- Possess with intent to supply a Class B drug (Cannabis), contrary to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

As part of a separate investigation led by [Cleveland Police](#), the 55-year-old was also convicted of three counts of indecent images of children, contrary to the Protection of Children Act 1978, and one count of possession of prohibited images of a child, contrary to the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. The Longhirst, [Middlesbrough](#) defendant is now a registered sex offender and will be subject to a 10-Year Sexual Harm Prevention Order.

In May 2010, Davison was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for producing a chemical weapon, preparing acts of terrorism, three counts of possessing material useful to commit acts of terror and one count of possessing a prohibited weapon. When arrested in 2009, searches at his home address found he had manufactured Ricin, which was found in a jar in his kitchen.

Detective Constable Dave Medd from the Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT) at Cleveland Police said: "This was one of the worst cases I have dealt with due to the disturbing nature of the images. The victims in these images suffer horrendous ordeals, and as a force we're committed to doing everything possible to bring those who access such images to justice."

Head of Counter Terrorism Policing North East, Detective Chief Superintendent James Dunkerley said: "Those subject to notification orders are strictly monitored, and breaches of any kind are taken extremely seriously and will be prosecuted. We continue to work tirelessly alongside our partners to identify any further offending and ensure that individuals are brought to justice."

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Why do we allow this trash to live amongst us?

All-terrain exoskeleton turns your body into a superhuman e-hiker

Source: <https://newatlas.com/outdoors/dnsys-x1-all-terrain-exoskeleton/>

Apr 16 – If you thought the [Hypershell](#) was a weird one-and-done style of product, it's time for a rethink. There are more AI-driven outdoor exoskeletons on the way, designed to help amateur adventurers go farther faster with less effort.

Next up: the X1 from Chinese startup Dnsys. Slap this piece of motorized AI onto your waist and thighs and upgrade your anatomy with an extra 900 watts of walking, hiking, scrambling, climbing and running power. The X1 shoulders up to 83 lb (38 kg) of load, empowers user speeds over 16 mph (26 km/h) and packs down small for travel.

Even after years of covering safety, industrial, military and medically targeted [exoskeletons](#), the idea of a wearable recreational performance-booster didn't come anywhere near our radar until Hypershell put its Omega lineup on Kickstarter [just over a year ago](#). That looked like an off-the-wall one-off at the time, but it might just have kicked off the age of the temporary-cyborg adventure-seeker. Just like ebikes open up doors to fitness and exercise for people who might not dare to take off on a long cycle without some assistance, these recreational exoskeletons promise to welcome people to hiking and climbing experiences that might otherwise be beyond their fitness level. So while the idea might sound like complete sci-fi lunacy right now, these things could end up being extremely useful, and a very liberating way to bypass physical constraints. Like Hypershell, Dnsys is introducing its wearable outdoorsy exo via Kickstarter, with a campaign that's set to launch at 9 a.m. EDT



today. And it's clearly used Hypershell's exoskeletons for benchmarking, looking to outperform them on every line item of the spec sheet.



The X1's bragging rights start off with a lighter 3.5-lb (1.6-kg) build that ducks below the 4-lb (1.8-kg) weight of the lightest Hypershell model from last year's Kickstarter campaign. Meanwhile, the X1 puts out 100 watts more than any Hypershell, resulting in an extra 18 pounds (8 kg) of weight-offsetting capability, which estimates in at 83 lb (38 kg) total.

Just imagine carrying a huge, stuffed backpack – an old-school external-frame pack to match the Dnsys styling – and feeling like you're hiking with nothing more on your back than a breezy, fast-drying shirt.

Of course, you don't actually have to be carrying 83 lb of miscellaneous life-sustaining kit on your back to benefit from the 30 lb-ft (40 Nm) of torque the X1 kicks into your stride. Even if you're simply day hiking with no more than a water bottle in-hand, the X1 promises to remove stress

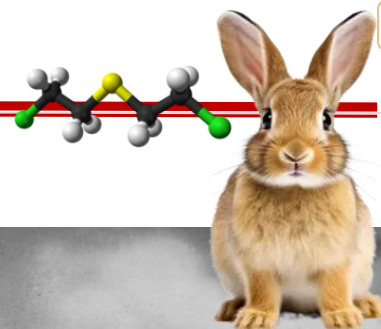
from each step, cutting up to 50 percent of the energy expended so you can stay fresher for longer and journey farther.

Whatever one's mission of the day is, the X1 starts by identifying and analyzing leg positioning via its onboard motion sensor to the tune of thousands of times every second. This information runs through advanced AI algorithms on the dual-core 240MHz processor to interpret intentions and instantaneously adjust motor output to the wearer's pace and movements.

The AI also learns the X1 owner's movements over time so it can better personalize its output to the way you typically use it.

Like a high-performance hybrid sports car, the X1 also includes a push-button boost mode that instantly marshals the full 900 watts (1.2 hp). That allows you to shoot for a top running speed of 16.7 mph (27 km/h) – not quite peak-human [27.8-mph](#) Usain Bolt territory, but it tops the [average half-marathon runner's pace](#) by about 10 mph (16 km/h).





Bunny Island: Japan and Chemical Weapons

Source: <https://www.forces.net/heritage/history/bunny-island-japan-and-chemical-weapons>



A short ferry ride away from mainland Japan, situated in the East/Inland Sea lies an island with a dark history. Leading up to the Sino-Japanese War the island hosted a secret manufacturing facility for the production and testing of chemical weapons. Today, the island is better known as Usaga Jima or Rabbit Island, made famous by the wild colony of rabbits who roam there freely delighting scores of tourists.

The chemical weapons program was top secret, and the island was immediately erased from all maps of Japan that were made after 1929.

The origins of the bunnies on the island also remains a mystery. One theory is that the poisonous gas produced on the island was tested on their ancestors. However, that theory has not been officially confirmed.

The extent of the Japanese chemical weapons program became known at the end of World War Two through a series of interrogations of high-ranking military officials by US intelligence.

It was revealed that the chemical warfare policy allowed the use of chemical weapons in China but not in the Pacific Theatre against the Allies due to the former not having the ability to retaliate in the same way. The Japanese believed that the Americans on the other hand with their national industrial capacity could retaliate on a much greater scale.

Finding chemical warfare morally horrifying, President Franklin D. Roosevelt shunned their use. In practice, the Americans only developed the capacity to engage in widescale chemical warfare towards the end of World War Two, at which point nuclear bombs made the question of chemical weapons obsolete.

The 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibited the use of chemical and biological weapons in war. However, since the end of the First World War, chemical weapons have taken the lives of more than a million people globally.





The Battle of Shanghai, also known as the Battle of Songhu 1937. (Picture: Alamy)



Bunnies against the backdrop of an abandoned power plant on Okunoshima island. (Picture: Addy Cameron-Huff)



The first of its kind, the protocol had major drawbacks. It did not ban the production or stockpiling of gas or chemical weapons. A conciliatory 'just in case' clause enticed the major players who used poisonous gas in the Great War to sign, namely Germany, Britain, Austria, Russia, and France.

The Land of the Rising Sun did not sign the 1925 Geneva Protocol. In 1929, Japan embarked on its chemical weapons program and by 1945 they had produced more than 6,000 tons of poisonous gas.

The production took place on Okunoshima, a small island off the coast of Hiroshima, measuring 800m in width.

It was chosen for its secluded location away from civilian populations. In May 1929, the Okunoshima facility began production of tear and mustard gases but would later produce a myriad of other lethal gases such as phosgene.

From 1937 to 1945, Japan used chemical weapons on as many as 2091 separate occasions, primarily in China. Estimates of casualties range from 36,968 to 80,000, including both military personnel and civilians.

As the first shots of the war in China were fired during the Marco Polo Bridge Incident on 7 July 1937, the Japanese army began to use chemical weapons against the Chinese almost immediately.



The first reported incident was as early as 18 July 1937.

One of the worst occasions, when the gas was used, was during the 'Ichang Incident'. During the battle that lasted three days, the Japanese army bombarded the Chinese with gas shells for almost five hours, dropping more than 300 gas bombs.

The Chinese military, being technologically inferior to the Japanese Imperial Army, had no way of retaliating and lacked even basic protective equipment. Few soldiers were issued with gas masks and the ones that had them lacked the training to use them properly. Japan knew China did not have the capability to retaliate with chemical weapons. The same was not true of the United States. On 6 June 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt publicly warned Japan:

"I desire to make it unmistakably clear that if Japan persists in this inhuman form of warfare against China or against any other of the United Nations, such action will be regarded by this Government as though taken against the United States and retaliation in kind and in full measure will be meted out."

The warning worked, as confessed by General Akiyama Kinsei, who served as the director of the Chemical Weapons training school at Narashino from 1935 to 1940. During interrogation, he said that Roosevelt's warning of mass-scale retaliation prevented the Japanese from employing chemical warfare against the Allies in the Pacific Theatre.

Today, the island once famous for the production of horrific deadly weapons is a tourist hotspot. While there is a 'Poison Gas Museum' that outlines the atrocities that were committed (mostly in China)



with the weapons that were manufactured there, most people come for a different reason. The island is overrun by friendly feral bunnies. A theory suggests that the rabbits are the descendants of the animals that were experimented on during the time that Okunoshima was an active facility for the production of poisonous gases.

However, the official line claims the animals that were used for experimentation were culled when the facility was shut down. Another theory is that eight rabbits were bought onto the island by school children who were no longer able to take care of them. Since cats and dogs are prohibited on the island and without any natural predators, the fluffie (the official name for a colony of bunnies) bred like ... rabbits. Today, there are thousands of them hopping around the island, enjoying the attention of tourists – which during high season can also number thousands. The rebranding of the island's image, whether unintentional or not, is in line with the rest of the county's push towards being seen as a pop-culture superpower of all things cute and fantasy – an intentional move away from Japan's old reputation of a fearsome militaristic state. While there may be a lot of disparaging theories on how the rabbits got onto the island, few could deny that they are cute, or 'kawaii' in Japanese.

Chemical Warfare and Chemical Terrorism Psychological and Performance Outcomes: a Special Issue of military Psychology

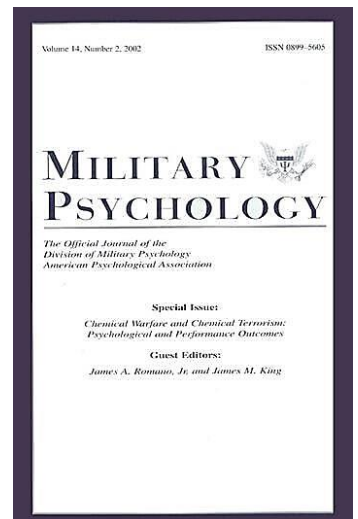
By James A. Romano, Jr. and James M. King | 1st Edition (2002)

Source: <https://www.routledge.com/Chemical-Warfare-and-Chemical-Terrorism-Psychological-and-Performance-Outcomes-a-Special-Issue-of-military-Psychology/RomanoJr-King/p/book/9780805896619>

This special issue of *Military Psychology* reports behavioral, pharmacological, and toxicological science research on military performance as it is affected by chemical warfare agents (CWAs) and their pharmacological countermeasures. The papers in this issue are a diverse assembly; some very pharmacological in orientation, others driven by behavioral neuroscience. The unifying theme is the psychological consequences or organic syndromes that may be confused with consequences resulting from exposure to CWAs or use of their medical countermeasures.

CONTENTS | Volume 14, Number 2, 2002

Contents: J.A. Romano, Jr., J.M. King, Preface to the Special Issue. J.A. Romano, Jr., J.M. King, Psychological Factors in Chemical Warfare and Terrorism. J.H. McDonough, Performance Impacts of Nerve Agents and Their Pharmacological Countermeasures. D.M. Cerasoli, D.E. Lenz, Nerve Agent Bioscavengers: Protection With Reduced Behavioral Effects. W.J. Smith, Vesicant Agents and Anti-Vesicant Medical Countermeasures: Clinical Toxicology and Psychological Implications. S.I. Baskin, G.A. Rockwood, Neurotoxicological and Behavioral Effects of Cyanide and Its Potential Therapies.



CHAPTER 47 – Chemical Warfare Agents and Risks to Animal Health

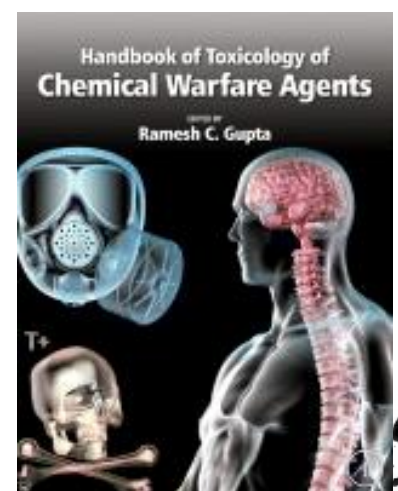
By Tina Wismer

Handbook of Toxicology of Chemical Warfare Agents | 2009, Pages 721-738

Source: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/B978012374484500047X>

Publisher Summary

The CDC Strategic Planning Working Group, as part of their preparedness plan for possible terrorist attacks using biological or [chemical weapons](#), has called for “prompt diagnosis of unusual or suspicious health problems in animals.” The CDC recommended establishing “criteria for investigation and evaluation of suspicious clusters of human and animal disease or [injury](#) and triggers for notifying law enforcement of suspected acts of chemical terrorism.” With many of the military agents, there are few initial indicators of a chemical attack. It has been proposed that animals could serve as sentinels for chemical terrorism. Animals are susceptible to all four basic types of military agents: choking, blister, blood, and nerve agents. They can also be affected by incapacitating agent BZ (3-quinuclidinyl benzylate), [riot control agents](#), [ricin](#), and [abrin](#). Since chemical warfare agents can be deployed by a variety of inexact



methods, domestic and wild animals living in proximity to human populations will be affected. Due to the expansion of suburbia, human-wildlife interactions are also increasing. Livestock are very important potential targets of attack as they have secondary ramifications for human health and disruption of the food chain.

The book

This groundbreaking book covers every aspect of deadly toxic chemicals used as weapons of mass destruction and employed in conflicts, warfare and terrorism. Including findings from experimental as well as clinical studies, this one-of-a-kind handbook is prepared in a very user-friendly format that can easily be followed by students, teachers and researchers, as well as lay people. Stand-alone chapters on individual chemicals and major topics allow the reader to easily access required information without searching through the entire book.

This is the first book that offers in-depth coverage of individual toxicants, target organ toxicity, major incidents, toxic effects in humans, animals and wildlife, biosensors, biomarkers, on-site and laboratory analytical methods, decontamination and detoxification procedures, prophylactic, therapeutic and countermeasures, and the role of homeland security.

Wave of 'Narco chemical terrorism' as cartel may soon 'drop fentanyl from drones'

Source: <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/world-news/wave-narco-chemical-terrorism-cartel-32588539>

Apr 20 – A terrifying wave of "narco chemical weapons [terrorism](#)" is emerging in Mexico as one of the country's most powerful [drug](#) cartels has adopted the use of chemical explosives. Earlier this month it emerged members of the [Jalisco New Generation Cartel](#) (CJNG) had dropped chemical agents from drones in Coahuayana, a municipality in the state of Michoacán.

The Apatzingán Human Security Observatory said more than 100 [cartel](#) gunmen used "high-powered weapons" as well as "explosive bombs of C4 and asphyxiant chemicals with [drones](#)" to take control of local communities.

The chemicals reportedly caused asphyxiation and itching. Several locals and six community police officers suffered the adverse effects.

Security expert Dr Robert J Bunker, director of research and analysis at [C/O Futures](#), told the Daily Star the CJNG's use of chemical agents in this way is "new/unique". "It raises the terror level for the locals bombed," he explained.

Dr Bunker said the CJNG's continued innovation in terms of weapons capabilities raises the possibility of more terrifying developments. He said: "In the past we have only seen IEDs [improvised explosive devices] strapped on drones and IED bomblets utilised. If the CJNG keeps experimenting we may even see stand-off rockets, multiple bomblets on a drone being dropped (as we have seen in Syria and [Ukraine](#)) or possibly even firearms placed on drones."

As for the use of chemical agents, Dr Bunker said the CJNG's goal for now is "psychological impact on local villagers, opposing cartel sicarios [hitmen], or Mexican police and military personnel".

He said: "We could think of it as a new form of narco chemical weapons terrorism since it might produce some hysteria, especially if a white powder (even flour) was used for further PSYOPS effect." PSYOPS (psychological operations) are military operations that aim to alter an enemy's state of mind.

"The intent would be to drive villagers from their homes or opposing cartel or police/military personnel from where they are set up," Dr Bunker said.

However, there is potential for cartels to start using chemical agents in a more "destructive" manner beyond simply causing "hysteria", he said. Dr Bunker explained "aerosolized fentanyl or another dangerous aerosolized substance" could be dropped from drones.

"Then some casualties, including fatalities, would likely be seen, which at that point would mean bonafide chemical weapons were being used by the cartels," he said.

Dr Bunker identified the CJNG as the most likely cartel to try this given the gang's "track record of new weapons innovations". Although there are no indicators the CJNG will go down this path at the moment, he added: "The CJNG's recent use of asphyxiant chemicals itself has taken everyone by surprise, so we can't rule this out given their ongoing wildcard behaviours."



2024 CBRNE-RELATED CONFERENCES



<https://www.ibmata.org/events/>

The International Border Management and Technologies Association (IBMATA) is a not for profit international non-governmental organisation (NGO) committed to the safe and secure movement of people and goods across international borders.

The challenges facing border agencies across the globe – whether run by immigration, customs, police, or a combination of these – have never been greater.

In a world of globalisation, the volume of people and goods crossing borders continues to rise year on year. Managing these volumes whilst meeting public expectations of facilitation and security is becoming ever more complex.

The demands of both the international freight and travel industries for modern and innovative approaches to border control are increasing annually. Border agencies are relying increasingly upon technology – whether visible, in the form of automated border controls, or invisible such as data analytics and risk assessment – to manage these pressures.

At the same time threats posed by international organised crime, terrorism, smuggling, trafficking, and irregular migration must be met. Border agencies cannot solve these pressures alone. More than ever, they need help not just from other government departments and agencies, but also from other international partners and stakeholders.

Who can join?

Membership is open to members of the following groups or organisations:

- All government departments and agencies charged with the responsibility of managing the international movement of people, goods and materials across national borders; including pre-entry, on-entry and after entry applications;
- Intergovernmental organisations with a vested interest in the management of people and goods across international borders;
- Non-governmental organisations with a vested interest in the management of people and goods across international borders;
- Transportation companies (including airlines, shipping companies, rail operators, freight forwarders) with a legitimate interest in supporting our aim;
- Port, airport, and other management entities with a legitimate interest in supporting our aim; and
- Those technology suppliers, business integrators and other private sector entities who support the safe and secure movement of people and goods across international borders whilst facilitating flow, in accordance with the aims of the organisation.



ESEM24

11-14 DEC 2024

Emirates Society of Emergency Medicine Conference

<https://esemconference.ae/>

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

On behalf of the Emirates Society of Emergency Medicine, we are excited to announce the Emirates Society Emergency Medicine Conference 2024 - ESEM24 to be held in the vibrant city of Dubai – United Arab Emirates from 11- 14 December 2024.

As we reflect on the past conferences and the success we have achieved together, I am filled with immense gratitude and pride in the collaborative spirit, dedication, and expertise that each one of you brought to the ESEM conference played a pivotal role in making it a resounding success in the International Platform. ESEM conference Scientific Program brings forward the highest quality of education content fostering a deeper understanding of emerging trends, innovative practices, and the latest research in emergency medicine and will continue to develop its most popular Track Sessions, including Fulcrum Debates, Pick-A-Clue, Mortality & Morbidity, Target your therapy, Trauma, and other subbranches related to the field of emergency medicine; Plenary Sessions delivered by world-renowned speakers, pre-conference workshops advancing most updated hands-on techniques.

Our commitment to a global perspective has resonated, leading to increased international collaboration over the past years, and will continue to propel collective expertise to new heights. We look forward to having the continued support of all our sponsors and stakeholders whose dedication to the advancement of Emergency medicine has made us achieve this milestone of success. We are encouraged by the passion, research, and innovation of Emergency Medicine researchers who contribute to the collective knowledge of the emergency medicine community, and we welcome you to become part of ESEM24 in Dubai – UAE. Welcoming you to join us in Dubai as we come together to explore, collaborate, and advance the field of emergency medicine. Your participation is integral to the success of this conference, and we look forward to having you with us at this largest international Emergency Medicine gathering in UAE.



Kindest regards,
Rasha Buhmaid
 President
 Emirates Society of Emergency Medicine, UAE

NCT | Upcoming Events

- 1 **NCT | America del Sur**
BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA | 6 - 8 FEBRUARY 2024
- 2 **NCT | Europe**
ZAGREB, CROATIA | 21 - 23 MAY 2024
- 3 **NCT | USA**
EDGEWOOD, MARYLAND, USA | 3 - 5 SEPTEMBER 2024
- 4 **NCT | APAC**
HUA HIN, THAILAND | 29 - 31 OCTOBER 2024
- 5 **NCT | Middle East**
ABU DHABI, UAE | 8 - 10 DECEMBER 2024





CTX
PROTECT • RESPOND • RECOVER

19-20 June 2024
ExCeL London

Countering Tomorrow's Threats, Today

<https://ctexpo.co.uk/visit/>

“Since 2009, CTX has been the premier event for stakeholders in UK and international counter-terrorism”

Entry to the show is free for professionals from industry, infrastructure, government and policing. You can register for a ticket on this website in early February. For advance notice of when the registration form is live, [send us a message here](#)

Whether you are a business looking to improve security, a member of the emergency services, or responsible for protecting critical infrastructure, CTX is for you.

With multiple theatres and demo zones, you can learn from the best minds in CT. [Click here](#) to see the Conference Programme from the 2023 event.

Our audience is drawn from:

- Academia
- Business & Industry
- Construction
- Defence
- Embassies & Consulates
- Emergency Services
- Festivals & Outdoor Events
- Finance & Banking
- Hotels and Restaurants
- Intelligence Services
- Leisure Services
- Maritime
- National & Local Government
- National Infrastructure
- Nuclear
- Policing
- Retail Centres
- Security
- Telecoms
- Transport & Aviation
- Venues & Sports Stadia



ABSA INTERNATIONAL
The Association for Biosafety and Biosecurity

3rd International Biosecurity Virtual Symposium
May 7-8, 2024

Register Now!



<https://www.isfeh11.org/>

The **International Seminar on Fire and Explosion Hazards (ISFEH)** is an opportunity for participants to present new research, exchange information and discuss current issues in the broad areas of fire and explosion research, mitigation and prevention.

The **ISFEH** is a long-standing tradition that brings together distinguished researchers from around the world. Since 1995, the ISFEH has successfully been held in Moscow (1995, 1997), Lake Windermere (2000), Londonderry (2003), Edinburgh (2007), Leeds (2010), Providence (2013), Hefei (2016), St. Petersburg (2019), and Oslo (2022).

In 2025 the **Eleventh International Seminar on Fire and Explosion Hazards (ISFEH 11)** is hosted by the Faculty of Civil and Industrial Engineering at Sapienza University of Rome.

This is the **30th anniversary** of the ISFEH and we look forward to celebrating this milestone with you!

The 11th ISFEH will include invited lectures from leading researchers in the field and presentations of peer-reviewed papers. All accepted and presented papers will be included in the seminar proceedings. Poster sessions provide an excellent opportunity to discuss the latest research one-on-one. Students are encouraged to take part in these sessions and prizes will be awarded.

In addition to the scientific programme, Rome offers an ideal setting with countless popular attractions and hidden gems.



4th Forensic CBRN-e Course

Dates: 01 June – 11 June 2024

Organised by Turkish CBRN Association (CBRN Defence), together with the Forensic Scientists Association,

Deadline for Registration: 15 May 2024

Objective

CBRN (Chemical Biological-Radiological and Nuclear) threat has become a serious security and peace problem in today's world. In particular, activities such as regional crises, ethnic conflicts, radical movements and international terrorism pave the way for the proliferation of CBRN weapons. The Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, the chemical attack on the Tokyo subway, the bioterrorist events after the September 11, 2001 attack, the chemical weapons used several times in neighbouring Syria, nuclear power plant accidents, and radiation-use in our daily lives, the chemical and nuclear threat emerged in the recent ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, and especially the white phosphorus chemical weapons attacks used in Gaza have shown us that the CBRN threat will unfortunately increase even more in the upcoming years, perhaps increasing the possibility of insidious use of these invisible dangerous advanced technological weapons in war and terrorist incidents by means of biotechnology, nanotechnology and artificial intelligence. However, more importantly, the threat of CBRN weapons in the Middle East



geographical region where our country is centrally located has taken its place in asymmetric warfare. The CBRN threat also brings along risks such as the use of weapons of mass destruction and hazardous substances in regional wars and by terrorist groups, their spread as a result of accidents and nuclear power plant accidents. Defence and protection against these events is a situation that not only security/governmental/first responder forces but also all civilian citizens should know, and so we need to increase our awareness and consciousness on this issue.

For these reasons addressed above, as the Turkish CBRN Association, together with the Forensic Scientists Association, we will hold the 4th CBRN-e Forensic online course between 01 June-11 June 2024 in order to increase our level of preparation for CBRN incidents in our country and public and to increase our knowledge.

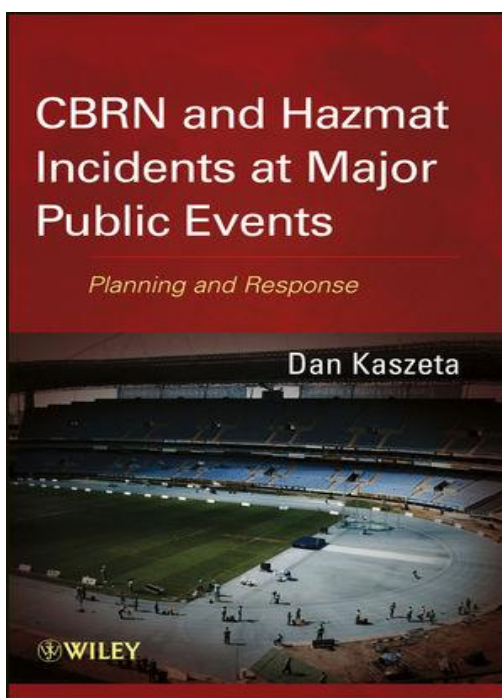
Course Content

The Forensic CBRN-e course which we had organised in 2020 and 2021 will now be planned for the fourth time in a such meaningful period of age when our world is under a very threatening and sensitive about CBRN. We will provide lectures including the topics under overview of CBRN agents, CBRN Legal Legislation, History of the Use of agents, Indicators of Use of Bioweapons with General Characteristics, Bioterrorism, Response Plans in the Use of Biological Warfare Agents, Diagnostic Methods, Sample Collection, Principles and Measures in biological defence, Is COVID-19 Biological Weapon and its protection, diagnosis and treatment principles, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Categories, Production Conditions. Use of Hazardous Substances Identification Guide, CBRN-e Substances and Delivery Methods, Dissemination Devices, Dirty Bombs, Radiation Basic Concepts, Biological Effects of Radiation, Dose Limits of Radiation Workers, Detection of Radiation, Radionuclear Accidents and Events, Intervention and Management of Radionuclear Incidents, CBRN-e Vehicles (Unmanned / Manned), Biochemical Forensics, General Properties and Effects, Analysis of Chemical Weapons in Laboratory, CBRN-e Crime Scene Investigation Laboratory, Detection and Analysis Methods of Chemical Weapons, Principles of Chemical Weapon Suspected Sampling, First Response in Chemical Weapon Injuries, Emergency and Disaster Management and Intervention Principles in CBRN Events, Management Organisation. During the course, scenario-based interactive studies on CBRN incident scene management practices will also be carried out.

Registration and Course Procedures

The course will be given in return for donation. In order to complete your registration for the training, you must fill in the form on the link (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfwDZmaHaBzIQmQX3VKgZXEWsk0aantwscTBMw570UYJMuN0Q/viewform?usp=sf_link), and then you will be registered to the 4th Forensic CBRN-e whatsapp group.

The lectures are 60 hours in total and will be held between 09.00-18.00 on weekends and 18.00-23.00 on weekdays. Attending at least 70 % of the lessons and passing the exam is compulsory for the certificate. It is compulsory to switch on the camera during the course. Since the course will be given for donation, there is no refund. However, you can transfer it to another friend.



Must Read



ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE



BIO NEWS



The pandemic
is OVER!

Pandemic by numbers (as of April 24, 2024)

	CASES	DEATHS	COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES	MOST AFFECTED COUNTRIES*
<u>COVID-19</u>	(704,429,276) 704,753,890	(7,007,695) 7,010,681	229	USA, India, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, S. Korea

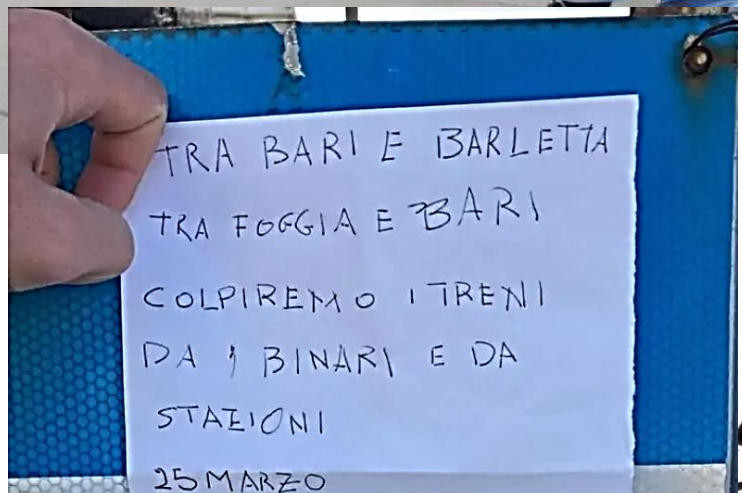
* over 30 million cases | numbers in parenthesis are patients of the previous month

Biological bomb alert in Trani, two tickets at the station with the signature in Arabic: "It will be your hell"

Source: <https://www.unionesarda.it/en/italy/bomb-alert-in-trani-two-tickets-at-the-station-with-the-signature-in-arabic-quot-it-will-be-your-hellquot-cceectbx>



Mar 25 – On the sheets a **message** written in **capital letters**, in an **Italian that leaves room for doubts and questions** and the **signature in Arabic**: «between Bari and Barletta, between Foggia and Bari we will hit the trains from tracks and stations. March 25th will be your hell." It's the **bomb scare** that shocked Trani this morning. The discovery was made in the station and immediately triggered the security plan created to counter the presence of explosives in the railway yard. The white sheet on which the threatening phrases were



written in capital letters with dark ink was posted near the tracks together with another message written on a squared sheet of paper, also in capital letters, which ends with the word "Inshallah" translated into Arabic which means "God willing". The sheet reads: **«We have placed a biological device in the Trani railway station. Old school biological device and device in another school in Trani, city of corrupt justice. We will fight until the end.»**

A suspicious suitcase was also found together with the tickets. Thus the clean-up activities began by police officers, carabinieri, financiers, bomb disposal experts and firefighters aided by colleagues from the specialized Nbc nucleus or nuclear, biological, chemical and radiological unit of Bari.

Russia Claims U.S. Still Operating Biolabs in Ukraine, Ukraine Using U.S Chemical Weapons

By Angeline Tan

Source: <https://thenewamerican.com/world-news/europe/russia-claims-u-s-still-operating-biolabs-in-ukraine-ukraine-using-u-s-chemical-weapons/>

Mar 26 – In an interview with the *Izvestia* newspaper on March 24, Vladimir Tarabrin, Russia's permanent representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and Russia's envoy to the Netherlands, claimed that the **United States continues to operate 30 biolabs on the territory of Ukraine** as part of an illegal military-biological program.

The number of American laboratories on Ukrainian territory has been "well-known for a long time," Tarabrin said.

The diplomat recalled that the head of Russia's Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Protection Forces, Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov, had alleged in March 2022 that 30 such biolabs existed. "Our armed forces discovered documents confirming the extensive military biological program deployed by the US and NATO countries on the territory of Ukraine and other former Soviet republics," he said.

The Kyiv government allegedly began destroying dangerous pathogens in the laboratories and suspending research on February 24, 2022, the day Russia started its military operation against Ukraine, but "in 2023 the implementation of those programs resumed, only their name was changed," Tarabrin claimed.

When questioned if the number of the U.S. biolabs in Ukraine still stands at 30, the ambassador said, "According to our data, yes." "It's not surprising, therefore, that over the past 20 years, Washington has been blocking all Russian initiatives aimed at strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) regime and creating an effective mechanism for verifying compliance with its provisions by all participating countries," Tarabrin said.

Over the past two years, Moscow has repeatedly raised concerns over a supposed network of secretive U.S.-funded laboratories in Ukraine, publishing troves of documents captured from Kyiv, which it claims are related to the operations of those facilities.

Last April, Kirillov said Russia had "no doubt that the US, under the guise of ensuring global biosecurity, conducted dual-use research, including the creation of biological weapons components, in close proximity to Russian borders."

For its part, the U.S. government has confirmed the existence of the biolabs in Ukraine, but insisted that they are entirely legal and not meant for military use, despite mostly being funded via the Pentagon. Washington has dismissed Moscow's claims of the labs being used to work on bio-weapons as a "Russian disinformation campaign."

Furthermore, Kirillov said a year ago that the U.S. biolab program in Ukraine, which was previously known as "joint biological research," was rebranded as "biological control research" so that it could continue operating.

Besides, Tarabrin stated that Ukraine has repeatedly used chemical weapons provided by the United States against the Russian military.

"Over the course of the special military operation, we have recorded cases of Ukraine's Armed Forces deploying chemical weapons manufactured in the US," Tarabrin said, saying that the deliveries form part of a well-established and illegal scheme of deploying non-lethal chemical weapons to Kyiv.

He underscored that the use of toxic chemicals by Ukraine has become systematic, as Western backing permits Kyiv to breach international law with impunity. According to Tarabrin, the Ukrainian military uses various types of home-made ammunition, grenades, and containers with unknown substances against Russian forces.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), an arms-control treaty administered by the OPCW, an intergovernmental organization headquartered in The Hague, was adopted in January 1993 and came into force four years later. As of August 2022, 193 states had signed the treaty.

Ukraine has ratified the document and accepted all its obligations. The convention forbids all member states from producing, acquiring, and stockpiling chemical weapons, as well as transferring them directly or indirectly. The signatories are also banned from using such weapons.



Tarabin noted that Moscow is drawing the attention of international organizations, particularly the OPCW, to the violations. “I think the US and its dependents can only be stopped by maximum transparency, the identification of specific facts that show that they directly supply, or facilitate the supply, of these substances to Ukraine in violation of the CWC,” he said. Russia’s Defense Ministry has repeatedly slammed Kyiv for provocations with the use of chemical weapons, including acts on the territory of Ukraine. Last April, the ministry claimed that Ukraine’s Security Service (SBU) was plotting such a provocation with the use of “hazardous chemicals” in the city of Sumy in northeastern Ukraine. Kyiv has denied the accusations. Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on March 25 that the lethal terrorist attack on the Crocus City Hall in Russia last week was a clear effort to intimidate Russia and serves the interests of the Ukrainian government. Speaking with law enforcement and regional officials, Putin argued the atrocity fit Kyiv’s modus operandi. “This atrocity may be only a link in a whole series of attempts by those who have been fighting our country since 2014, using the neo-Nazi Kyiv regime as their hand,” Putin said. “And the Nazis, as is well known, never hesitated to use the most dirty and inhumane means to achieve their goals.” A terrorist group calling itself Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K) has claimed responsibility for the concert venue massacre. The United States and the EU quickly maintained that Ukraine had nothing to do with the attack, and that ISIS-K, a group allegedly operating in Afghanistan and Central Asia, was the sole culprit. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on March 25 that there is no evidence the Ukrainian government was involved in the Crocus City massacre. “ISIS bears the sole responsibility here, the sole responsibility,” Jean-Pierre insisted. “[Russian President Vladimir] Putin understands that. We shared that with their government. And so there is no evidence, absolutely no evidence, that Ukraine was involved there.” Jean-Pierre specifically alluded to the March 7 public advisory, warning Americans in Russia to avoid concert venues owing to a threat of attacks by “extremists.” She said this was communicated to the Russian government as well, but she did say how. Thus far, Russian security services have detained a dozen suspects, including the four alleged perpetrators, who were intercepted as they drove toward the border with Ukraine. They were identified as Tajik nationals. Speaking on March 25, Putin described them as “radical Islamists.” Another question that needs to be addressed is why the terrorists headed for Ukraine after conducting the attack, Putin said. “Who was waiting for them there? It is clear that those who support the Kyiv regime do not want to be accomplices and sponsors of terrorism. But a lot of questions remain,” the Russian leader added. While Russia knows who pulled the trigger, the president said, Moscow still needs to find who gave the order, making it clear that Kyiv was his primary suspect.

Bill Gates warns of smallpox terror attacks and urges leaders to use ‘germ games’ to prepare

Source: <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/bill-gates-warns-smallpox-terror-000100099.html>

[Bill Gates](#) has warned that governments must prepare for future pandemics and smallpox terror attacks by investing billions in research and development.

Mr Gates made the warning during a [Policy Exchange](#) interview with the chair of the Health Select Committee [Jeremy Hunt](#).

The [Microsoft](#) founder also called for the formation of a new billion-dollar World Health Organisation Pandemic Task Force.

While the research may be expensive, he said that it could also lead to other innovations, such as eradicating flu and the common cold.

He said that countries like the US and the UK must spend “tens of billions” to fund the research.

“I’m hoping in five years, I can write a book called, ‘We ARE ready for the next pandemic’, but it’ll take tens of billions in R&D – the US and the UK will be part of that”, he said.

“It’ll take probably about a billion a year for a pandemic Task Force at the [WHO](#) level, which is doing the surveillance and actually doing what I call ‘germ games’ where you practise.”

Mr Gates suggested that the “germ-games” could include preparing for acts of bioterrorism such as smallpox attacks on airports.

“You say, OK, **what if a bioterrorist brought smallpox to 10 airports?** You know, how would the world respond to that? There’s naturally-caused epidemics and bioterrorism-caused epidemics that could even be way worse than what we experienced today”, he said.



Despite the dire warning, the world's fourth richest man also struck an optimistic note during the interview, anticipating the "incredibly beneficial" medical innovations that will come from increased funding for pandemic prevention.

"The nice thing is a lot of the R&D we need to do to be ready for the next pandemic are things like making vaccines cheap, having big factories, eradicating the flu, getting rid of the common cold, making vaccines just a little patch you put on your arm, things that will be incredibly beneficial even in the years when we don't have pandemics," he said.

He added that he will continue to talk about pandemic preparedness, as part of his work as a philanthropist.

He said: "So along with the climate message and the ongoing fight against diseases of the poor, pandemic preparedness is something I'll be talking about a lot.

"And I think it'll find fertile ground because, you know, we lost trillions of dollars and millions of lives. And citizens expect their governments not to let that happen again."

CDC Releases **Hidden** COVID-19 Vaccine Injury Reports

By Zachary Stieber | Senior reporter for The Epoch Times based in Maryland.

Source: <https://www.theepochtimes.com/health/cdc-releases-hidden-covid-19-vaccine-injury-reports-5617872>



Apr 03 – The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released previously hidden reports of facial paralysis and other adverse events following COVID-19 vaccination.

The 780,000 reports were received shortly after the COVID-19 vaccines were rolled out, and show people experienced a wide range of post-vaccination problems, including heart inflammation, miscarriages, and seizures.

"Loss of consciousness and seizure immediately following injection. Went to ER by ambulance," one person reported.

"Diagnosed with Bells Palsy today due to left-sided facial numbness and paralysis," another said.

People lodged the reports with V-safe, a text-message system created by the CDC to monitor for possible side effects of COVID-19 vaccines.

The CDC, for years, declined to make the V-safe data public, instead publishing [studies](#) that described the reports as providing reassurance about the safety of the shots. However, according to data released in 2022, nearly 8 percent of the 10 million users required medical attention or hospital care after vaccination, and many others reported missing school, work, or other normal activities. That topline data came from check-the-box surveys. The same judge who ordered the release of that data [ordered the agency](#) in January to disclose free-text entries from a different section where individuals could describe their experiences. U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, appointed by former President Donald Trump, dismissed the government's arguments that processing the responses and redacting sensitive information would require too much work.

The [first two tranches](#), comprising 780,000 reports from some 523,000 people, include dozens of reports of heart inflammation, hundreds of reports of facial paralysis, and thousands of reports of tinnitus.

Multiple people said things were so bad that they were struggling with suicidal thoughts.

"For 24 hrs after [the] shot I was so fatigued I could not stay awake. I also have some very strong suicidal thoughts. Zero appetite," one individual wrote.

Another person said they experienced symptoms of an allergic reaction. "I read where [sic] this vaccine should not be administered to anyone allergic to PEG and I am allergic to PEG. It would be incredibly reassuring if someone would call me as all I run into is dead ends," the individual said.

The free-text portion of the surveys was the only place for people to report adverse events, including heart inflammation, even though the CDC knew the shots might cause those events, previously released documents [showed](#). Other documents [showed](#) the CDC became aware of the vaccines possibly causing myocarditis, or heart inflammation, and a related condition called pericarditis early in 2021 but hid the knowledge from the public.

Judge Kacsmaryk's order came in litigation brought by the Informed Consent Action Network (ICAN), a nonprofit that has compelled the release of a number of government files since the COVID-19 pandemic started.



“ICAN had to sue the Centers for Disease Control in order to gain access to the COVID-19 shot V-safe adverse event data, which is yet another shameful chapter in the decades-long history of federal health officials trying to cover up vaccine risks by ignoring patterns of vaccine reaction symptoms in reports made to the government,” Barbara Loe Fisher, co-founder and president of the National Vaccine Information Center, told The Epoch Times after reviewing the new data.

“When people report the same symptoms over and over again after getting a biological product—in this case ‘shortness of breath’ and ‘heart palpitations,’ which are both symptoms of myocarditis that has been causally linked to mRNA COVID shots—the public should be warned, not kept in the dark. It raises questions about what else government health officials are hiding,” she added.

The free-text entries are not dated. Elizabeth Brehm, an attorney representing ICAN, said the group is seeking the dates of the reports from the CDC. The group does know that the entries are the earliest ones received by the CDC. V-safe was launched as the vaccines were rolled out in late 2020. The rest of the entries are expected to be produced on a rolling basis.

A CDC spokesperson declined to answer many questions, including those related to the dates of entries.

“V-safe participants who reported that they received medical care after vaccination were called and encouraged to submit a [VAERS](#) report. If they submitted a VAERS report and the adverse events were classified as serious (as defined in the Code of Federal Regulations), CDC attempted to obtain additional information (medical records, hospital records, etc.) about the reported adverse event,” the spokesperson told The Epoch Times. “All data collected from VAERS is processed and analyzed for unusual patterns or unusually high numbers of rare and serious adverse events after vaccination.”

She said the information from VAERS helped detect problems the agency now acknowledges are caused by the vaccines, including myocarditis.

Canada's Biosecurity Scandal: The Risks of Foreign Interference in Life Sciences

By Brendan Walker-Munro

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20240403-canada-s-biosecurity-scandal-the-risks-of-foreign-interference-in-life-sciences>

Apr 03 – In July 2019, world-renowned biological researchers Xiangguo Qiu and Keding Cheng were quietly [walked out](#) of the Canadian government's National Microbiology Lab (NML). The original allegation against them was that Qiu had [authorized](#) a shipment to China of some of the deadliest viruses on the planet, including Ebola and Nipah.

Qiu and Cheng, a married couple, subsequently lost their security clearances and [were then fired by the NML in January 2021](#). At the time, both were subject to investigations by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). The NML said [both had lost their positions for 'breaches of policy'](#); it did not say what those breaches or policies had been. Then the story seemed to go away—until now.

On 28 February 2024, after a legal battle in which the attorney-general of Canada took the speaker of the country's House of Commons to [court](#), the government finally released a trove of heavily redacted documents.

One document makes for stark reading. In a report dated 30 June 2020, the CSIS recommended that Qiu and Cheng lose their security clearances because of Qiu's ‘... close and clandestine relationships with a variety of entities of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which is a known security threat to Canada; ... complete lack of candor regarding her relationship with those institutions; and her reckless judgement regarding decisions that could have impacted public safety and the interests of Canada’.

The CSIS found that Qiu, whilst employed by the Canadian government, had:

- Signed on to China's Thousand Talents recruitment program (under which she stood to be paid up to C\$1 million) and had prepared applications for other talent programs in China;
- Travelled several times, with NML's blessing, to the Wuhan Institute of Virology to train staff on biosecurity; and
- Published a peer-reviewed paper with a major-general in the People's Liberation Army who held a position at the Academy of Military Medical Sciences and was ‘China's chief biological weapons defense expert engaged in research related to biosafety, bio-defense and bio-terrorism’.



Perhaps the most concerning allegation was that in March 2019 Qiu had arranged for a shipment of 15 virus strains, including Ebola and Nipah, to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, the act that ultimately led to her and Cheng's suspension.

That has raised the [question](#), still unanswered, of why the scientists, though suspended in 2019, were not let go until January 2021, despite such an adverse finding having been made against them in June 2020.

Could this same lapse in security happen in Australia? The question raises a difficult issue, the personnel security arrangements around life sciences research, especially where that research is considered to be high-risk to national security or to the general public. For example, the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, run by the CSIRO, [requires](#) anyone accessing its labs to have a security clearance. But whether a clearance is needed for similar labs in [Victoria](#), [New South Wales](#) or [Queensland](#) isn't clear. And even security clearances don't seem to be enough: both Qiu and Cheng held clearances to work at NML, but still engaged in a whole range of potentially compromising and questionable behavior.

Nor does the veil of complete secrecy over biosecurity research appear to be working. According to [Global Biolabs](#), a service that tracks high-security disease labs around the world, Australia is home to four labs just like NML that can handle the deadliest diseases in the world. While there is no evidence that any have had problems like NML's, we might never know even if they did.

Ebola (along with diseases like anthrax, SARS, and the bacteria that cause botulism and tularaemia) is classified as a [security sensitive biological agent](#), so any such work on such agents that goes on at these labs is secret. Even unauthorised [identification](#) of which labs work on such agents is a crime. Freedom of Information requests for those details can be [ignored](#). And, if such evidence could ever make it to court, the government could seek [orders](#) to have proceedings heard in secret.

Since 2020 [academics](#) have been the target of foreign intelligence and military services. That threat is increasing, [according](#) to ASIO Director-General Mike Burgess. An analysis in 2021 showed that [more than 300 Australian academics](#) were enrolled in Chinese talent recruitment programs, raising concerns about China's access to Australian technology. Participation in such programs isn't illegal, but it can raise significant concerns about conflicts of interest and potential access to sensitive information. And even steps taken to [publicize foreign arrangements](#) don't seem to have discouraged [collaborations](#) with potentially adversarial governments.

In November 2023 Australia's most prominent funding body, the Australian Research Council, [took steps](#) to beef up research security. But these steps don't seem to have been matched by either the [CSIRO](#) or [National Health and Medical Research Council](#), some of the biggest supporters of life-sciences research in Australia. And, even if they were, such steps wouldn't apply to labs that funded their own research.

Biotechnology is just one of Australia's [critical technologies](#). If Australia wants to avoid the Canadian experience, it needs to embed personnel and physical security checks into the conduct of all of its high-risk research. Universities and funding bodies need to share the risk and due diligence investigations with government, especially intelligence agencies. And, when red flags arise, law enforcement and intelligence agencies need to respond swiftly and provide authoritative and comprehensive guidance to research entities on their next steps.

[Brendan Walker-Munro](#) is a senior lecturer at Southern Cross University.

New one-and-done vaccine protects against multiple coronaviruses

Source: <https://newatlas.com/medical/vaccine-protects-multiple-coronaviruses/>

Apr 04 – A single-shot vaccine that protects against multiple coronaviruses, including the one that causes COVID-19, has been developed. It **erased all viral traces from the lungs of animal subjects**, opening a pathway for a similar human vaccine.

While Sars-CoV-2, the virus that causes [COVID-19](#), has gobbled up most of the headlines these past few years, it's really just one nasty virus in a group of them. The class of bugs it belongs to is known as Sarbecovirus, which stands for SARS Betacoronavirus. These are viruses that mostly develop in bats and other mammals and have the potential to spread to humans like SARS-CoV-1 (which became commonly known as SARS during its 2020 outbreak).

As we all know by now, there are individual vaccines to combat different viruses like the ones that ward off COVID-19 and the flu. But getting people to take multiple vaccines is a challenge. Plus, it gets even trickier because these vaccines need to be repeated on a regular basis for them to have maximum efficiency.

In what could be a step change in the fight against coronaviruses, researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of Wisconsin-Madison created a new vaccine that, when tested on hamsters, removed all traces of SARS-CoV-1 and SARS-CoV-2 plus its omicron variants from the animals' lungs. The team had [previously identified hamsters](#) as suitable animals on which to test potential vaccines.



Spiking the virus

To create the vaccine, the team focused on the same thing that the [anti-COVID mRNA vaccines](#) targeted: the spike proteins that are a hallmark of coronaviruses. In this case, the researchers created a trivalent vaccine, meaning that it targets three prominent spike proteins common to multiple Sarbecoviruses, particularly [variants](#) of the SARS and COVID-19 causing bugs.

The researchers say that they are hopeful that their successful vaccine can be further developed to combat germs from other coronavirus subfamilies as well as other viruses like those that cause the flu. They indicate the desire for some of the specific antigens they developed in their research to move forward to preclinical trials and they imagine what other types of research could help expand and improve their findings.

"While we are encouraged by these results, there are several additional avenues that would be interesting to explore in future work," they wrote in a paper published in [Nature Communications](#). "Enhancing mucosal immunity might not only enhance protection against viral infection, but also decrease viral transmission. Intranasal vaccination against SARS-CoV-2 has been explored with several platforms (and) the adaptation of our platform for intranasal delivery could be a promising avenue for improving the mucosal response. Characterizing the longevity of protection would also be an interesting avenue for future research. It would be particularly interesting to determine whether stronger mucosal immunity results in more durable protection against symptomatic disease."

Based on the results of the future research projects they detail, a trivalent sniff once every few years rather than multiple jabs in the arm every year may eventually become the standard of care for boosting our defenses against multiple infections.

How to avoid human-made pandemics

By Filippa Lentzos and Jens H. Kuhn

Source: <https://thebulletin.org/2024/04/how-to-avoid-human-made-pandemics/>

Apr 10 – How do you pitch a news story about people agreeing rigorously with each other?

That question was raised by a journalist during a report [presentation at the UN](#) by the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists'* Independent Task Force on Research with Pandemic Risks. This 28-member task force, consisting of ourselves and other [experts in biosafety, biosecurity, microbiology, epidemiology, and ethics from around the world](#), was taking questions about its new report, which tackles the highly challenging topic of recommending constructive ways to improve safety and security for research with known and potentially pandemic pathogens. The report was especially noteworthy because the diverse task force—some of whom publicly and vehemently disagree on which activities are risky and should be better monitored—was able to find common ground, and a lot of it. As this one journalist stated, "journalists cover conflict." This conflict orientation has been a consistent problem in news coverage of recent epidemics and pandemics and can, in our opinion, even be seen in [a recent article](#) in the *Bulletin*. Far too often, the stories of conflict have overtaken those of solutions. Science depends upon constructive conflict and that process is essential for learning lessons for the next pandemic. But if conflict becomes too polarized and personal it risks creating divisions that leave us less prepared for public health emergencies.

So let us look at where our group found consensus.

Most viral disease outbreaks stretching back over millennia have been caused by viruses transmitted to humans through direct or indirect contact with other animals. Our increasing encroachment on the natural environment and climate-driven changes in ecosystems are likely creating more opportunities (or even pressure) for potential pandemic viruses to spill over into novel animal hosts, including humans, now than in the past.

Studying viruses with spillover potential is the best way to combat them. At the same time, there is a growing awareness in the research community that field collection and experimental manipulation of such viruses—while sometimes scientifically crucial—carry risks of accidentally or intentionally seeding a pandemic after spreading to other workers, family members, and/or the wider community.

In general, current governance over occupational health and safety adequately weighs the direct biosafety risks to the researcher in the laboratory, and biosafety has gradually and significantly improved over time. But biosafety regulation is unevenly distributed across different countries, institutions, and facilities, and rapid advances in virology research are opening up new types of risk that still need to be incorporated into established biosafety frameworks (for example, future impacts of artificial intelligence on biological research). A small subset of research on known or potential pandemic pathogens requires consideration of how such research efforts—in or outside the laboratory—may accidentally, inadvertently, or intentionally disrupt the health of large groups of humans or other animals. In 2022, the task force was convened by the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* to analyze the trends and oversight of high-risk research on pathogens. The goal was to identify ways and means for research with pandemic risk to be managed as safely, securely, and responsibly as possible.



The task force's [report](#) discusses the benefits and potential risks of virology research, including risks of unintentional exposure of researchers in the laboratory or field, or the local community, to biological agents, and risks of unauthorized access, loss, theft, misuse, diversion or release of biological agents, and it outlines emergent challenges in science and technology associated with pandemic pathogen research.

The report's overriding recommendation is that when there is potential for harm to large numbers of people as a result of research with pandemic risk, and especially where it is questionable whether those at risk will benefit from the research, additional oversight, beyond occupational health and safety, is essential. Also crucial is a more elaborate risk assessment than is currently performed for research posing these risks.

Moreover, research with pandemic risk should have high-probability benefits for public health. Researchers and their institutions have an obligation to identify whether the risks from research with known and potential pandemic pathogens are proportionate to the potential benefits of the research and to assess whether less risky forms of research could be equally beneficial. In cases when there is not a proportionate harm-benefit ratio, researchers and their institutions have an ethical obligation not to perform that particular piece of research. Where the potential benefits of the research could be achieved by less risky means, the research design of choice should be the less risky one.

In other words, the bottom line for the task force is that research with pandemic risks should only proceed when the research community and relevant oversight bodies can demonstrate that the research would be conducted safely, securely, and responsibly; that no alternative and safer research could reach the same public-health ends; and that adequate assurances are provided of substantial benefits expected in the near term, with a plausible plan for equitable global distribution of these benefits.

Today, therapeutics and vaccines have reduced the disease burden of COVID-19, influenza, hepatitis C, poliomyelitis, and a variety of other viral diseases. Basic scientific knowledge obtained from studying viruses has been an essential foundation for creating lifesaving countermeasures. These countermeasures have greatly benefited public health and will continue to do so in the future.

Simply put, this important work saves lives. Yet, navigating research with pandemic risk warrants additional precautions. We must create, maintain, and continuously improve a safe, secure, and responsible work environment for researchers in the laboratory, the clinic, and the field. In so doing, and by starting from what unifies us rather than what divides us, there is a chance we can better manage the next pandemic and build public trust along the way.

Filippa Lentzos is Co-Director of the Task Force on Research with Pandemic Risk and an Associate Professor in Science & International Security at King's College London, where she is jointly appointed in the Department of War Studies and the Department of Global Health & Social Medicine. She is also an Associate Senior Researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and a Non-Resident Scholar at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) in Monterey, California, USA. Lentzos serves as the Chair of the World Health Organization (WHO) Technical Advisory Group on Responsible Use of the Life Science and Dual-Use Research (TAG RULS DUR), a member of the WHO Health Security Interface – Technical Advisory Group (HSI-TAG), a member of the UK Biosecurity Leadership Council, and as the NGO Coordinator for the Biological Weapons Convention.

Jens H. Kuhn is a Principal at Tunnell Government Services (TGS), tasked as one of two Principal Scientists and the Director of Virology (contractor) at the NIH/NIAID/DCR/Integrated Research Facility at Fort Detrick (IRF-Frederick), a biosafety level 4 (BSL-4) facility in Frederick, MD, USA. Kuhn specializes in highly virulent viral human and animal pathogens. He is the author of "Filoviruses: A Compendium of 40 Years of Epidemiological, Clinical, and Laboratory Studies" (Vienna: Springer, 2008) and contributor to "The Soviet Biological Weapons Program—A History" (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

Action Needed to Improve U.S. Smallpox Readiness and Diagnostics, Vaccines, and Therapeutics: Report

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20240411-action-needed-to-improve-u-s-smallpox-readiness-and-diagnostics-vaccines-and-therapeutics-report>

Apr 11 – A [new report](#) from the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#) says that action is needed to enhance U.S. readiness for smallpox and related diseases, as well as to improve diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics that could be used in case of an outbreak. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed weaknesses in the ability of U.S. public health and health care systems to adapt and respond to an unfamiliar pathogen, as did challenges during the recent mpox outbreak to rapidly making diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics available at scale.



The development of better diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics — also called medical countermeasures — would improve the nation's ability to respond to a smallpox outbreak or attack using the virus, the report says. It also calls for strengthening the systems and policies that would allow public health and health care systems to act quickly and effectively, such as those that could support rapid distribution of a vaccine.



The report says U.S. population changes and advancements in gene editing and synthesis technologies have drastically altered the potential for a smallpox outbreak or attack in recent years. It is now possible to engineer variola virus, the virus that causes smallpox, raising the possibility of accidental or intentional release. Furthermore, illnesses related to smallpox such as mpox, Alaskapox, and cowpox are increasingly found in humans, presenting the need for medical countermeasures that can detect, treat, and prevent these diseases.

In 1980, the World Health Assembly declared smallpox eradicated, and no naturally occurring smallpox cases have been reported since that time. Two WHO sanctioned collections of the live variola virus — at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, and the Laboratory for Applied Microbiology at Koltsovo in Russia — store samples and use variola virus in research. Viruses related to variola, called orthopoxviruses, are also used in research.

Research using live variola and related viruses is essential for creating and improving medical countermeasures for smallpox and other related diseases, and to ensuring the U.S. is ready to respond to an outbreak, says the report. Live variola in particular is essential for developing new targets for more effective therapeutics; verifying the efficacy of vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics for smallpox; and creating animal models that can be used in research in place of humans. Research using these viruses can also fill gaps in our fundamental understanding of orthopoxvirus biology, ecology, evolution, transmission, and disease onset in humans. As biotechnologies including gene editing and DNA synthesis continue to advance, the report says decision-makers need to consider the benefits and risks for smallpox medical countermeasures, noting such impacts will be amplified and accelerated by advances in artificial intelligence. For example, AI models could be used to understand how variola virus might naturally evolve within a population, helping to mitigate the spread of a new outbreak. However, such models could also aid those seeking to render existing treatments ineffective. The report concludes a risk-benefit analysis is needed for smallpox research using emerging technologies.

Smallpox Diagnostics, Vaccines, and Therapeutics

The committee that wrote the report examined the state of medical countermeasures that have been developed and stockpiled in the U.S. Strategic National Stockpile to identify, prevent, and treat smallpox. Despite research done in recent decades and the fact that more smallpox medical countermeasures are



available now than before the disease was eradicated, the nation's ability to respond to a smallpox event could be strengthened. The report says:

- ❖ **Diagnostic** tests are needed that can more accurately detect smallpox and related viruses, identify potential cases at earlier stages of disease, assess prior exposure or immunity to smallpox, be used across biosafety levels and in field settings, support disease surveillance, and enhance equitable access to testing than those available today.
- ❖ **Vaccines** that are safer, can be used across different populations, and are available as a single dose would support a faster and more effective response to a smallpox outbreak. Developing new smallpox vaccines that use a multi-vaccine platform — which use common vaccine vectors, manufacturing ingredients, and processes — would improve the capacity for rapid production and reduce the need for stockpiling.
- ❖ **Therapeutic** options that are safer and more diversified — such as antivirals with different and diverse targets, mechanisms of action, and routes of administration, or treatments based on novel technologies and platforms — would be advantageous supplements to existing therapeutics.

“The gaps in our ability to respond to a new infectious disease were revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic and recent mpox outbreak,” said committee chair Larry Gostin, distinguished university professor and director of the WHO Organizing Collaborating Center on National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University. “It is vital to prioritize research into the development of safer and more effective smallpox diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics, make judicious choices in stockpiling, and have modern, well-practiced, and adaptable plans for responding in the event of a smallpox outbreak.”

“The eradication of smallpox is one of the most significant accomplishments of medicine and public health, ending an ancient scourge of humanity,” said Victor J. Dzau, president of the National Academy of Medicine. “We have to protect against the reemergence of this disease by maintaining and strengthening effective and safe medical countermeasures.”

Readiness and Response

The report says that plans for responding to a smallpox outbreak or attack need to be flexible and continually updated to meet the challenges of multiple potential scenarios. The small number of manufacturers capable of producing smallpox medical countermeasures is a specific vulnerability, and there is currently insufficient capacity to scale production in the event of a large outbreak or attack. Logistics and supply chain management planning is critical, as is planning for regulatory responsiveness. COVID-19 and mpox demonstrated the challenge in public acceptance and effective risk communication for vaccines, and the same challenges with vaccine hesitancy and misinformation could occur in a smallpox outbreak. Clinical and public health guidance also needs to be updated to reflect new data and medical countermeasures so that health care providers and others on the front line of public health have the capability and capacity to respond to smallpox. In the case of an international smallpox emergency, U.S. readiness and response capabilities will be significantly affected by the ability of other countries to detect and contain smallpox transmission. Supporting international capacity and ability to access smallpox medical countermeasures will improve U.S. biosecurity in turn.

NCDC Investigates Unknown Killer Disease in Sokoto State After Four Deaths Recorded

Source: https://www.arise.tv/ncdc-investigates-unknown-killer-disease-in-sokoto-state-after-four-deaths-recorded/#google_vignette

Apr 13 – The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) said it has commenced a series of measures to unravel the immediate and remote causes of the unknown killer disease in Sokoto State which has claimed four lives.

The Centre said it was working in collaboration with other stakeholders to support the state government in actively searching for cases and to unravel the outbreak, in spite of the security challenges affecting access to the community.

The stakeholders included the Teaching hospital, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), the National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD), the State Ministry of Health, various Health workers, the Sokoto State Water Board, and other MDAs.

Speaking with journalists in Abuja on Tuesday, Director General of NCDC, Dr. Jide Idris, said the Centre was notified by the Sokoto State Ministry of Health on March 21, 2024, of reported cases of children



presenting with symptoms which included abdominal distension due to rapid onset of fluids in the abdomen (ascites), fever, vomiting and weight loss from Isa Local Government Area (LGA) of Sokoto State.

He said there was initial delays in getting diagnostic results from the laboratory tests in Sokoto which led NCDC to seek further laboratory investigations from the Teaching hospital, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), and the National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD).

Idris said **most of the cases were children aged four to 13 years, including some adults.** The patients came from different wards and settlements across the LGA.

“The NCDC deployed a National Rapid Response Team (NRRT) to work with the State Ministry of Health to further investigate and respond to this incident.

“So far, a total of 164 suspected cases have been identified in six wards of Isa LGA Bargaja (22), Isa North (17), Isa South (98), Tozai (12), Tsabre (4), and Turba (11).

“Unfortunately four deaths have been recorded amongst the suspected cases,” he said.

Idris explained that currently, two suspected cases are currently receiving care in Uthman Dan Fodio University Teaching Hospital (UDUTH) in Sokoto and one case discharged on account of improved symptoms.

He said four other suspected cases were also on admission at the Isa General Hospital, while about 130 cases were also receiving care either within the Primary Healthcare Centres (PHC) or home care in the affected LGA.

According to him, the initial clinical assessment and investigations of the cases admitted at the Teaching Hospital ruled out an infectious origin of this event, necessitating the need to search for other causes, including heavy metal testing.

He added that the results of the initial test for heavy metals for the index and first few suspected cases, revealed different blood levels of lead (Pb) and Chromium (Cr).

Observed activities in the affected communities included mining, agricultural practices which involve the use of various types of chemicals and pesticides, the health-seeking behavior and practices of the communities which may be detrimental to people’s health. NCDC said various samples of materials had also been taken and dispatched for analyses, including blood, abdominal fluids, environmental samples like soil and water, locally grown food produce including vegetables and grains, substances and ingredients used for food and drinks, pesticides and chemicals used in local guns.

The DG recalled that a similar incident was previously documented in 2023, also without a definitive diagnosis.

Idris sympathised with the families of the deceased who have lost their loved ones to this incident.

“NCDC acknowledges the leadership of the Sokoto State Government, the State Ministry of Health, the support of the UDUTH as well as all the healthcare workers and other stakeholders who are working hard to manage the incident.

“NCDC urges all the members of the affected and nearby communities to be vigilant and report anyone presenting with the above stated symptoms to the nearest health facilities to them or call NCDC toll free line (6232).

“Healthcare workers are also urged to report any suspected cases to LGA/State Disease Surveillance and Notification Officer or State Epidemiologist,” he said.

Meanwhile, regarding the incident in Kogi where a viral video showed that a student died from disease suspected to be Lassa fever, the DG said that from preliminary investigation, the cause of death was not traced to Lassa fever.

He said further investigation was ongoing by health officials in Kogi state.

Machine Learning Uncovers New Ways to Kill Bacteria With Non-Antibiotic Drugs

By Mariana Noto Guillen

Source: <https://www.sciencealert.com/machine-learning-uncovers-new-ways-to-kill-bacteria-with-non-antibiotic-drugs>

Apr 17 – Human history was forever changed with the [discovery of antibiotics](#) in 1928. Infectious diseases such as [pneumonia](#), tuberculosis and sepsis were widespread and lethal until penicillin made them treatable.

Surgical procedures that once came with a high risk of infection became safer and more routine. Antibiotics marked a triumphant moment in science that transformed medical practice and saved countless lives.

But antibiotics have an inherent caveat: When overused, bacteria can evolve resistance to these drugs. The [World Health Organization](#) estimated that these superbugs caused [1.27 million deaths around the world](#) in 2019 and will likely become an increasing threat to global public health in the coming years. New discoveries are helping scientists face this challenge in innovative ways. Studies have found that [nearly a quarter](#) of drugs that aren't normally prescribed as antibiotics, such as medications used to treat [cancer](#), [diabetes](#) and [depression](#), can kill bacteria at doses typically prescribed for people. Understanding the mechanisms underlying how certain drugs are toxic to bacteria



may have far-reaching implications for medicine. If nonantibiotic drugs target bacteria in different ways from standard antibiotics, they could serve as leads in developing new antibiotics. But if nonantibiotics kill bacteria in similar ways to known antibiotics, their prolonged use, such as in the treatment of chronic disease, might inadvertently promote antibiotic resistance.

In our [recently published research](#), my colleagues and I developed a new [machine learning](#) method that not only identified how nonantibiotics kill bacteria but can also help find new bacterial targets for antibiotics.

New ways of killing bacteria

Numerous scientists and physicians around the world are tackling the problem of drug resistance, [including me](#) and my colleagues in the [Mitchell Lab](#) at UMass Chan Medical School. We use the genetics of bacteria to study which mutations make bacteria more resistant or more sensitive to drugs. When my team and I learned about the widespread antibacterial activity of nonantibiotics, we were consumed by the challenge it posed: figuring out how these drugs kill bacteria.

To answer this question, I used a genetic screening technique my colleagues recently developed to study how [anticancer drugs target bacteria](#). This method identifies which specific genes and cellular processes change when bacteria mutate. Monitoring how these changes influence the survival of bacteria allows researchers to infer the mechanisms these drugs use to kill bacteria.

I collected and analyzed almost 2 million instances of toxicity between 200 drugs and thousands of mutant bacteria. Using a machine learning algorithm I developed to [deduce similarities between different drugs](#), I grouped the drugs together in a network based on how they affected the mutant bacteria. My maps clearly showed that known antibiotics were [tightly grouped together](#) by their known classes of killing mechanisms. For example, all antibiotics that target the cell wall – the thick protective layer surrounding bacterial cells – were grouped together and well separated from antibiotics that interfere with bacteria's DNA replication.

Intriguingly, when I added nonantibiotic drugs to my analysis, they formed separate hubs from antibiotics. This indicates that nonantibiotic and antibiotic drugs have different ways of killing bacterial cells. While these groupings don't reveal how each drug specifically kills antibiotics, they show that those clustered together likely work in similar ways. The last piece of the puzzle – whether we could find new drug targets in bacteria to kill them – came from the research of my colleague [Carmen Li](#). She grew hundreds of generations of bacteria that were exposed to different nonantibiotic drugs normally prescribed to treat anxiety, parasite infections and cancer. Sequencing the genomes of bacteria that evolved and adapted to the presence of these drugs allowed us to pinpoint the specific bacterial protein that [triclabendazole](#) – a drug used to treat parasite infections – targets to kill the bacteria. Importantly, current antibiotics don't typically target this protein. Additionally, we found that two other nonantibiotics that used a similar mechanism as triclabendazole also target the same protein. This demonstrated the power of my drug similarity maps to identify drugs with similar killing mechanisms, even when that mechanism was yet unknown.

Helping antibiotic discovery

Our findings open multiple opportunities for researchers to study how nonantibiotic drugs work differently from standard antibiotics. Our method of mapping and testing drugs also has the potential to address a critical bottleneck in developing antibiotics.

Searching for new antibiotics typically involves sinking considerable resources into [screening thousands of chemicals](#) that kill bacteria and figuring out how they work. Most of these chemicals are found to work similarly to existing antibiotics and are discarded.

Our work shows that combining genetic screening with machine learning can help uncover the chemical needle in the haystack that can kill bacteria in ways researchers haven't used before. There are different ways to kill bacteria we haven't exploited yet, and there are still roads we can take to fight the threat of bacterial infections and antibiotic resistance.

[Mariana Noto Guillen](#), Ph.D. Candidate in Systems Biology, UMass Chan Medical School.

Increased Age-Adjusted Cancer Mortality After the Third mRNA-Lipid Nanoparticle Vaccine Dose During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Japan

By Miki Gibo, Seiji Kojima, Akinori Fujisawa, et al.

Source: <https://www.cureus.com/articles/196275-increased-age-adjusted-cancer-mortality-after-the-third-mrna-lipid-nanoparticle-vaccine-dose-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-japan#!/>

Abstract

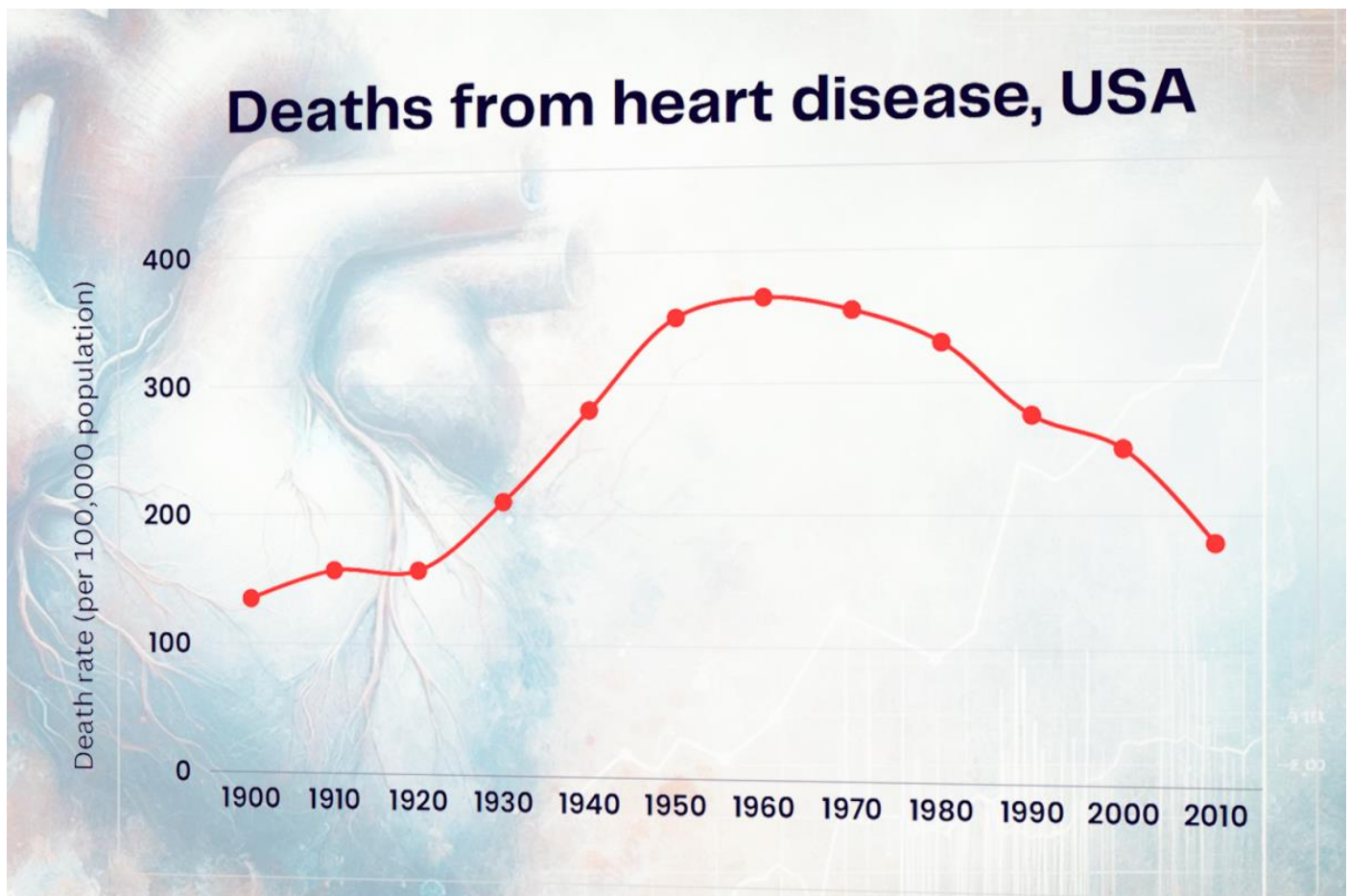
During the COVID-19 pandemic, excess deaths including cancer have become a concern in Japan, which has a rapidly aging population. Thus, this study aimed to evaluate how age-adjusted mortality



rates (AMRs) for different types of cancer in Japan changed during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022). Official statistics from Japan were used to compare observed annual and monthly AMRs with predicted rates based on pre-pandemic (2010-2019) figures using logistic regression analysis. No significant excess mortality was observed during the first year of the pandemic (2020). However, some excess cancer mortalities were observed in 2021 after mass vaccination with the first and second vaccine doses, and significant excess mortalities were observed for all cancers and some specific types of cancer (including ovarian cancer, leukemia, prostate cancer, lip/oral/pharyngeal cancer, pancreatic cancer, and breast cancer) after mass vaccination with the third dose in 2022. AMRs for the four cancers with the most deaths (lung, colorectal, stomach, and liver) showed a decreasing trend until the first year of the pandemic in 2020, but the rate of decrease slowed in 2021 and 2022. This study discusses possible explanations for these increases in age-adjusted cancer mortality rates.

Has COVID set us up for a major heart disease epidemic? It's happened before

Source: <https://newatlas.com/health-wellbeing/covid-flu-heart-disease-epidemic/>



Apr 18 – Over the first half of the 20th century the world saw growing rates of heart disease mortality. From the 1920s to the 1960s more and more people were dying from heart attacks. It was described as an [epidemic of heart disease](#). But in the mid-1960s heart disease mortality suddenly plateaued.

In the United States, for example, around 35% of overall deaths could be attributed to cardiac causes in 1966. From that point on heart attack mortality began to dramatically drop. By the mid-1990s overall deaths in the United States due to cardiac causes was almost half of what it was 30 years prior.

This rise and fall of heart disease mortality in the 20th century still remains a mystery to researchers. The numbers can't be explained by improvements in medicine and medical care. In fact, as rates of obesity increased in the later part of the century and processed food became more unhealthy, heart disease mortality realistically should have continued to rise. One researcher, writing about the mystery in 2012, suggested the decline of the 20th century heart disease epidemic cannot be effectively explained by dietary or physical factors. Instead, there must be an unknown



environmental biological factor at play. "The epidemic is now virtually at an end, but we are left with the question, has CHD [coronary heart disease] been due to an environmental biological factor, which is a micro-organism, a bacterium or a virus? If so, it has not been clearly identified, but it has never been fully investigated," [writes D.S Grimes](#).

Fallout from the flu pandemic

Around 20 years ago a pair of epidemiologists [presented a controversial new hypothesis](#) to explain this weird phenomenon: the 1918 influenza pandemic triggered a wave of heart damage in millions of people and primed them for later-life heart disease.

The research suggested a decline in H1N1 influenza activity over the decades following the 1918 pandemic correlated with a later drop in cardiac mortality. The hypothesis was that a combination of the virus circulating less and potential changes to the way the disease affects cardiovascular health in a host led to the overall decline in heart attack deaths over the later decades of the 20th century.

Unsurprisingly, this hypothesis has been fiercely debated by researchers over the past couple of decades. A [detailed dig into the epidemiological data](#) in 2016, from a trio of US researchers, found the connection between the 1918 pandemic and trends in mortality to be, "not congruent with the available data on long-term changes in heart disease mortality."

In other words - yes, there has been a dramatic rise and fall in heart disease mortality over the 20th century but, no, it is unlikely to be related to the 1918 flu pandemic.

More recently, epidemiological research has focused explicitly on the possible long-term effects of prenatal H1N1 exposure during the 1918 pandemic. Here, researchers looked specifically at what happened in the long-term to those either still in the womb or just born around the years of 1918-19.

[A compelling 2009 study](#) compared the 1919 birth cohort to those born just before or just after the period of the acute pandemic. Across a variety of benchmarks the researchers found significant long-term health complications were more prominent in the 1919 cohort. After the age of 60 the 1919 cohort were found to have 25% more incidences of heart disease, plus lower levels of educational attainment compared to other cohorts.

"The fact that this cohort of people had elevated risks of disease even more than six decades after the pandemic indicates that maternal exposure to the influenza virus appears to have had wide-ranging and long-lasting health effects on offspring," [said Eileen Crimmins](#), one of the co-authors on the study, in a 2020 interview.

These studies are, of course, subject to a whole host of limitations, not the least of which being they can only look at overall population trends and not actually quantify which children were directly exposed to influenza while in the womb and which were not. The conclusions are based on the idea that the virus was so prevalent during 1918/19 that it is likely most babies were exposed.

Interestingly, the data is not limited to US birth cohorts. Subsequent studies have looked at long-term outcomes from birth cohorts born during the flu pandemic in both [Taiwan](#) and [Sweden](#). Similar patterns were noted from increased rates of long-term health problems to lower levels of educational attainment.

Human hearts meet SARS-CoV-2

SARS-CoV-2 is a very different virus to influenza. In many ways it is much more problematic. It can infect a far wider assortment of human organs and tissues than influenza and it is [mutating in ways very different](#) to H1N1.

The COVID pandemic has not waned and dissipated in the same way the 1918 pandemic did. Instead, the SARS-CoV-2 virus is frantically changing its form from month to month leading people to experience relatively frequent reinfections. This constant exposure to the virus may be amplifying its long-term impact, but of particular interest is the potential impact this could have on our hearts.

A [recently published study](#) from Japanese researchers laid out exactly how SARS-CoV-2 can infect and damage the heart. The researchers concluded with a stark warning: we may be facing a looming heart disease epidemic over the coming decades.

In order to infect someone the SARS-CoV-2 virus first needs to track down cells harboring a particular kind of enzyme. Called ACE2, this enzyme acts a bit like a doorway into the cell for a coronavirus. The virus's spike protein binds to ACE2, allowing the pathogen a pathway into the cell's inner machinery.

In news that will surprise nobody, ACE2 receptors are all over the epithelial cells that line our nose, mouth, lungs and airways. This is how COVID manifests in the illness that most people are now quite familiar with.

But ACE2 receptors are not isolated to those particular respiratory cells. ACE2 can be found all over the body in a wide variety of organs – and this receptor is found in relatively high volumes on cells inside our heart.

Early warning signs

Early on in the pandemic doctors started to see a significant uptick in patients presenting to emergency rooms with acute heart problems. In the first eight weeks of the pandemic hitting New York City in early



2020 paramedics had to deal with [three times the rate](#) of nontraumatic out-of-hospital cardiac arrests compared to the same time period in 2019. Similar data was coming out of other regions hit in the earliest phase of the pandemic. In Northern Italy, for example, out-of-hospital heart attacks spiked by 58% across those initial months in 2020.

An [early warning report](#) from a team of doctors in New York City published in April 2020 noted distinct signs of heart tissue injury in a number of deceased COVID patients. This virus was doing something to our hearts.

As more time passed, and longer-term studies accumulated, it became clear that SARS-CoV-2 infections notably affected a person's heart health. [Waves of infections correlated](#) with waves of heart attack deaths. In the 12 months following a bout of COVID people [were five times more likely](#) to suffer from myocarditis and twice as likely to experience a heart attack. Even recovered COVID patients [were showing longer-term signs](#) of heart damage.

But why were people facing a persistent risk of heart disease in the months, and perhaps years, following a case of COVID? Could a short-term infection with SARS-CoV-2 be causing a kind of long term damage to heart tissue that elevates one's risk of cardiac complications?

Possibly. But another hypothesis started to emerge. Maybe the virus was becoming a latent infection – sitting quietly in heart tissue and slowly degrading a person's overall heart health?

The lingering virus

To investigate this idea, a team of researchers, including Hidetoshi Masumoto and Kozue Murata from the RIKEN Center for Biosystems Dynamics Research, created a three-dimensional cardiac model in the lab using human-induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells. This led to what the researchers describe as a “vascular network-like structure that morphologically and functionally mimics the human heart.”

The cardiac tissue model was then infected with SARS-CoV-2 and the researchers found the infection effectively persisted for up to 28 days. Most interesting, however, were the experiments with only mild or moderate viral exposures. In these cases, the researchers saw cardiac function recover from any initial abnormalities within a month. But the virus remained present in the heart tissue despite causing any observable dysfunction.

“The relationship between the severity of acute illness and persistent viral infection in the heart tissue is indirectly suggested by experiments conducted in the paper using various viral titers,” explain Masumoto and Murata in an email to New Atlas. “In other words, if exposed to a very high viral load during the acute phase, it may lead to fatal acute cardiac infection rather than persistent infection. Conversely, infection with a milder viral load may result in the virus lingering in the heart without causing heart dysfunction, indicating the potential for persistent infection.”

Then, to mimic what happens in a human heart in cases of acute ischemic heart disease, the researchers exposed their cardiac model to hypoxic stress. This simulates a scenario where heart tissue struggles to meet increased oxygen demands.

The experiments found heart tissue with a persistent SARS-CoV-2 infection showed significantly increased dysfunction when exposed to stress compared to uninfected cardiac models. This was despite the infection being so mild that there was no identifiable day-to-day dysfunction.

“Our findings suggest that patients with persistent SARS-CoV-2 infection may be more susceptible to developing heart dysfunction compared to non-infected individuals in the face of these increasingly prevalent diseases,” Masumoto and Murata say. “Ischemic heart diseases fundamentally arise from an imbalance between oxygen demand and supply to the heart. Therefore, situations where oxygen demand in the heart increases rapidly, such as excessive exercise, might potentially create similar stress conditions on the heart.”

It's important to note that there are many unanswered questions right now. It is only speculation to suggest this lab model of persistent SARS-CoV-2 infection in heart tissue is responsible for the noted real-world increases in cardiac events following COVID. It is also unclear how often infections lead to persistent infiltration of heart tissue. Does vaccination reduce one's likelihood of a persistent infection? Do we all have some trace of SARS-CoV-2 in our heart tissue now, or is it just some of us? And perhaps most significantly, do frequent reinfections increase the chances of a persistent infection in heart tissue?

Masumoto and Murata call their findings a “warning for the possibility of a heart failure pandemic in the post COVID-19 era.” They are also cautious of not being unnecessarily alarmist. They suggest these potential heart health issues can be mitigated if we work now to recognize and understand what is possibly happening.

“We're not suggesting an undue fear of SARS-CoV-2 in our research,” Masumoto and Murata add. “Rather, we propose coexistence with SARS-CoV-2 in the post-COVID-19 era. We hope that our research results will advance the development of diagnostic and treatment methods for persistent cardiac infection, enabling coexistence between the novel coronavirus and humanity.”



So, what now?

If the 1918 flu pandemic caused a noticeable spike in heart disease over the following 50 years then what could a virus with a greater propensity for heart infiltration like SARS-CoV-2 cause?

There are too many unknowns to truly understand what the long-term effects of the COVID pandemic will be. And realistically, we will only clearly know decades from now if a few bouts with SARS-CoV-2 in 2020 and 2021 can lead to increased chances of heart disease in later life.

But we do know some things for sure. We know that viral infections can play a role in the development of heart disease. We also know that SARS-CoV-2 can affect the heart in ways that are relatively unique to coronaviruses. And we certainly know that over the first few years of the pandemic there has been a distinct increase in fatal cardiac events.

There are also some things we don't know for sure but have suspicions about. It is possible the 1918 flu pandemic triggered a century of poor health outcomes in its survivors. It is also possible the SARS-CoV-2 virus can lead to latent infections in the heart.

Eileen Crimmins, an demography expert and professor at USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology, is [clear in stating](#) the possible long-term concerns of this COVID pandemic.

"I think that COVID is setting us up for a hundred years of problems."

WHO Warns Growing Spread of **Bird Flu** to Humans Is 'Enormous Concern'

Source: <https://www.sciencealert.com/who-warns-growing-spread-of-bird-flu-to-humans-is-enormous-concern>



Apr 19 – The [World Health Organization](#) voiced alarm Thursday at the growing spread of H5N1 bird [flu](#) to new species, including humans, who face an "extraordinarily high" mortality rate.

"This remains I think an enormous concern," the UN health agency's chief scientist Jeremy Farrar told reporters in Geneva.

The current bird flu outbreak began in 2020 and has led to the deaths of tens of millions of poultry, with wild birds also infected as well as land and marine mammals.

Cows and goats joined the list last month – a surprising development for experts because they were not thought susceptible to this type of [influenza](#).

The A (H5N1) strain has become "a global zoonotic animal [pandemic](#)", Farrar said.

"The great concern of course is that in... infecting ducks and chickens and then increasingly mammals, that [virus](#) now evolves and develops the ability to infect humans and then critically the ability to go from human to human."

So far, there is no evidence that the influenza A(H5N1) virus is spreading between humans.

But in the hundreds of cases where humans have been infected through contact with animals, "the mortality rate is extraordinarily high", Farrar said.

From 2003 to April 1 this year, the WHO said it had recorded 463 deaths from 889 human cases across 23 countries, putting the case fatality rate at 52 percent.

In a worrying development, US authorities earlier this month said a person in Texas was recovering from bird flu after being [exposed to dairy cattle](#).



It was only the second case of a human testing positive for bird flu in the country, and came after the virus sickened herds that were apparently exposed to wild birds in Texas, Kansas and other states.

It also appears to have been the first human infection with the influenza A(H5N1) virus strain through contact with an infected mammal, WHO said.

When "you come into the mammalian population, then you're getting closer to humans," Farrar said, warning that "this virus is just looking for new, novel hosts". "It's a real concern."

Farrar called for beefing up monitoring, insisting it was "very important understanding how many human infections are happening... because that's where adaptation (of the virus) will happen".

"It's a tragic thing to say, but if I get infected with H5N1 and I die, that's the end of it. If I go around the community and I spread, it to somebody else then you start the cycle."

He said efforts were under way towards the development of vaccines and therapeutics for H5N1, and stressed the need to ensure that regional and national health authorities around the world have the capacity to diagnose the virus.

This was being done so that "if H5N1 did come across to humans, with human-to-human transmission", the world would be "in a position to immediately respond", Farrar said, urging equitable access to vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics.

Saudi Arabia: Mecca medical facilities on alert for worshipper inflow

Source: <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/saudi/saudi-arabia-mecca-medical-facilities-on-alert-for-worshipper-inflow-1.101614158>



Mar 13 – More than 50 medical facilities in the Saudi city of Mecca, home to Islam's holiest site, have been readied to render high-level services to worshippers expected in large numbers during the current month of Ramadan.

Eight hospitals and 43 healthcare centres have finalised their preparations for the season under plans overseen by the Saudi Ministry of Health.

The facilities include the Ajjad Emergency Hospital operating round the clock and three other emergency centres set up at the hallways of the Grand Mosque. In addition, a seasonal hospital is operating in the northern courtyard of the mosque, Islam's holiest place.

All of them are fitted with state-of-the-art equipment to handle emergencies.

The Mecca Health Cluster said it has put in place operational plans for the Ramadan season with all human resources and equipment ready to offer the required services, including outpatient clinics at all hospitals.

Ramadan traditionally marks the peak season of Umrah or minor pilgrimage at the Grand Mosque.

Worshippers from inside and outside the kingdom would flock to the Grand Mosque, which houses the Holy Kaaba, to perform Umrah and offer prayers.

To cope with the expected influx, Saudi authorities have unveiled a series of



measures to help worshippers perform rites smoothly and comfortably. The circumambulation courtyard of the mosque around the Holy Kaaba and the ground floor are designated for Umrah pilgrims during Ramadan. Likewise, authorities have allocated certain gates of the sprawling mosques for pilgrims' entry and exit to stave off overcrowding. In addition, buses ferrying worshippers are denied access into the precincts of the mosque. Instead, they stop at designated parking areas to facilitate traffic and head off congestion.

Kitum in Kenya: What's Inside the Deadliest Cave That Gave Rise to Ebola, Marburg Virus

Source: <https://www.sciencetimes.com/articles/49818/20240421/kitum-kenya-what-s-inside-deadliest-cave-gave-rise-ebola.htm>

Apr 21 – Kitum, dubbed the world's deadliest cave, could cause the next pandemic. The deep cave, which was reportedly widened by elephants became a haven for bats carrying diseases.

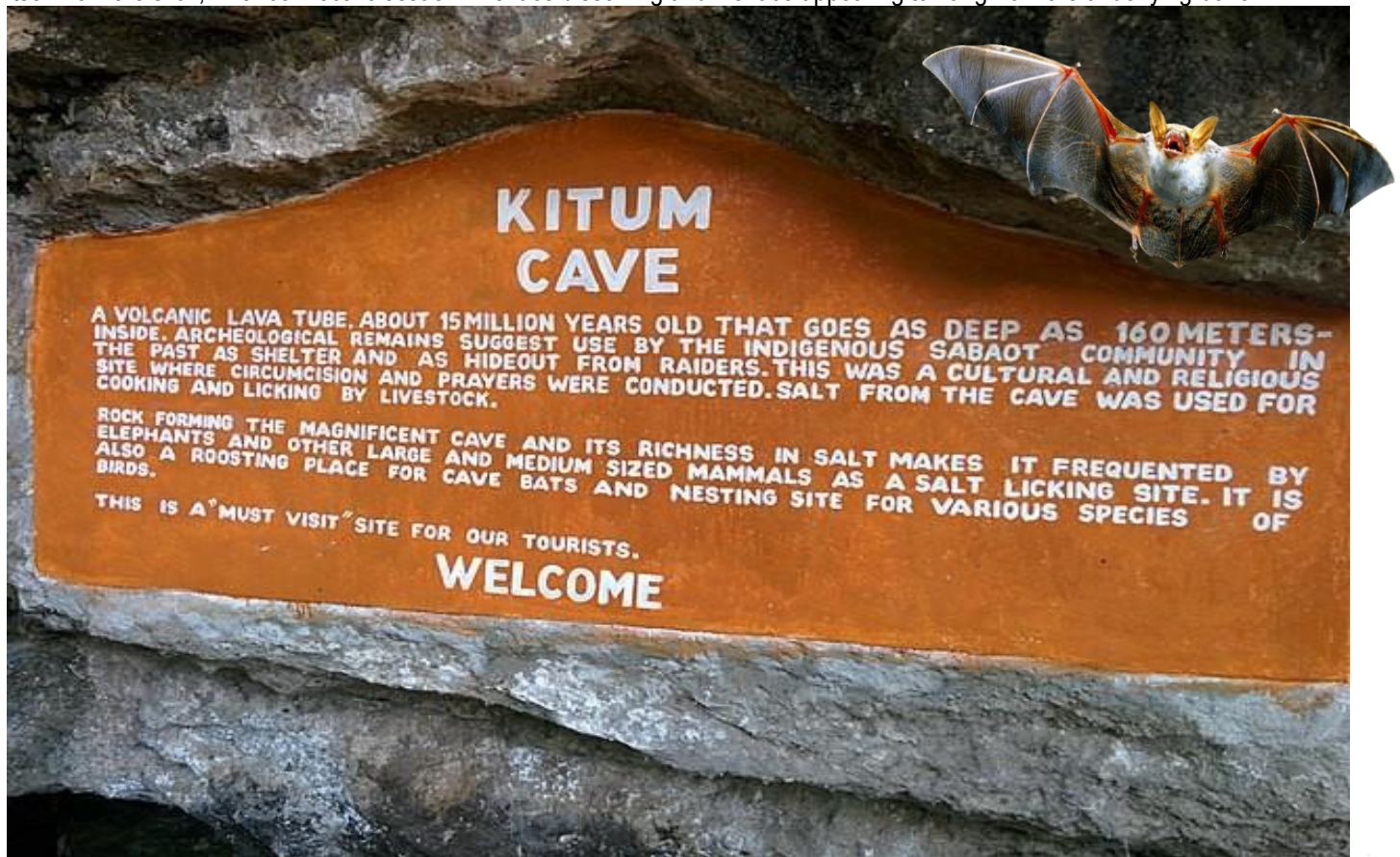
Kitum Cave: The Deadliest Cave in the World

[Kitum Cave](#) is located in Mount Elgon National Park in Kenya. It has a history that is simultaneously uplifting and unsettling.

The cavern's walls are covered in scuffs and marks that appear to be caused by miners searching for gems or gold. However, it turned out that the elephants were behind the markings on the wall.

Also, the place turned out to be home to some of the deadliest viruses known to man. [Ebola and Marburg virus reportedly started there](#). A French engineer working at a neighboring sugar refinery came into contact with the body-melting Marburg virus in 1980 while exploring Kitum Cave. He quickly passed away at a Nairobi hospital.

A book on the case characterized the man's rapid degradation from viral hemorrhagic or blood-letting fever "as if the face is detaching itself from the skull," with connective tissue in his face dissolving and his face appearing to hang from the underlying bone.



Kitum in Kenya: What's Inside the Deadliest Cave That Gave Rise to Ebola, Marburg Virus | (Photo : Wikimedia Commons/datakid musicman)





Seven years later, a Danish schoolboy on holiday with his family became the next victim of Kitum Cave. The boy passed away with the Ravn virus, a similar hemorrhagic virus.

What does Marburg virus do to the body?

1 Symptoms appear in two to 21 days

- FEVER
- HEADACHE
- SORE THROAT
- MUSCLE PAIN
- BLEEDING
- DIARRHEA
- SWELLING

2 Virus attacks kidney and spleen - causes deadly clotting and organ inflammation

3 Symptoms appear suddenly - from a simple cold to hemorrhaging blood within days

4 **50% AVERAGE DEATH RATE**
KILLS UP TO **88% OF INFECTED**

Kitum has become a breeding ground for zoonotic illnesses due to the valuable salty minerals found in the cave, which have attracted not just elephants but also buffaloes, antelope, leopards, and hyenas from



western Kenya, according to the researchers. Elephants have repeatedly extended and deepened the 600-foot-deep cave, only to see it turn into a home for disease-carrying bats.

Kitum Cave Could Give Rise to the Next Pandemic

Experts fear that it could be the home of the next pandemic - Marburg virus. The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) warned that Marburg virus was "epidemic prone." Marburg is reportedly a "highly virulent disease that causes hemorrhagic fever." The condition damages the cardiovascular system and reduces the body's ability to function. The virus belongs to the same family as the virus behind Ebola and has a fatality rate of up to 88 percent. The virus can be transmitted from person to person by contact with bodily fluids from an infected individual, as well as by fruit bats found all over central Africa. Touching towels or other items that have come into contact with an infected person can also spread the illness to others.

The Marburg virus might take up to 21 days to incubate in an infected person before symptoms appear. When they do appear, however, warning signs first resemble those of other tropical illnesses like malaria and Ebola.

Patients with infection often develop expressionless faces and deep-set eyes, making them appear "ghostly." In later stages, however, it causes bleeding from various openings, such as the vagina, eyes, nose, and gums. At present, there are no approved vaccines or therapies for the virus. Physicians rely on medications to treat symptoms and fluids to keep patients hydrated.

Multi-Drug Resistant Bacteria Found on ISS Mutating to Become Functionally Distinct

Source: <https://www.nasa.gov/centers-and-facilities/ames/ames-science/ames-space-biosciences/multi-drug-resistant-bacteria-found-on-iss-mutating-to-become-functionally-distinct/>

Apr 16 – In a new scientific paper funded by an Ames Space Biology grant, Principal Investigator Dr.

Kasthuri Venkateswaran of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory strains of the bacterial species ***Enterobacter bugandensis*** isolated from the International Space Station (ISS) were studied. Thirteen strains of *E. bugandensis*, a bacterium notorious for being multi-drug resistant, were isolated from the ISS. Study findings indicate under stress, the ISS isolated strains were mutated and became genetically and functionally distinct compared to their Earth counterparts. The strains were able to viably persist in the ISS over time with a significant abundance. *E. bugandensis* coexisted with multiple other microorganisms, and in some cases could have helped those organisms survive.

●► **Publication Impact:** Closed human-built environments, such as the ISS, are unique areas that provide an extreme environment subject to microgravity, radiation, and elevated carbon dioxide levels. Any microorganisms introduced to these areas must adapt to thrive. By delving into microbial dynamics in extreme environments, this research opens doors to effective preventative measure for astronaut health.



ICI
International
CBRNE
INSTITUTE

A common roof
for International
CBRNE
First Responders



Rue de la Vacherie, 78
B5060 SAMBREVILLE
(Auvelais)
BELGIUM

info@ici-belgium.be | www.ici-belgium.be